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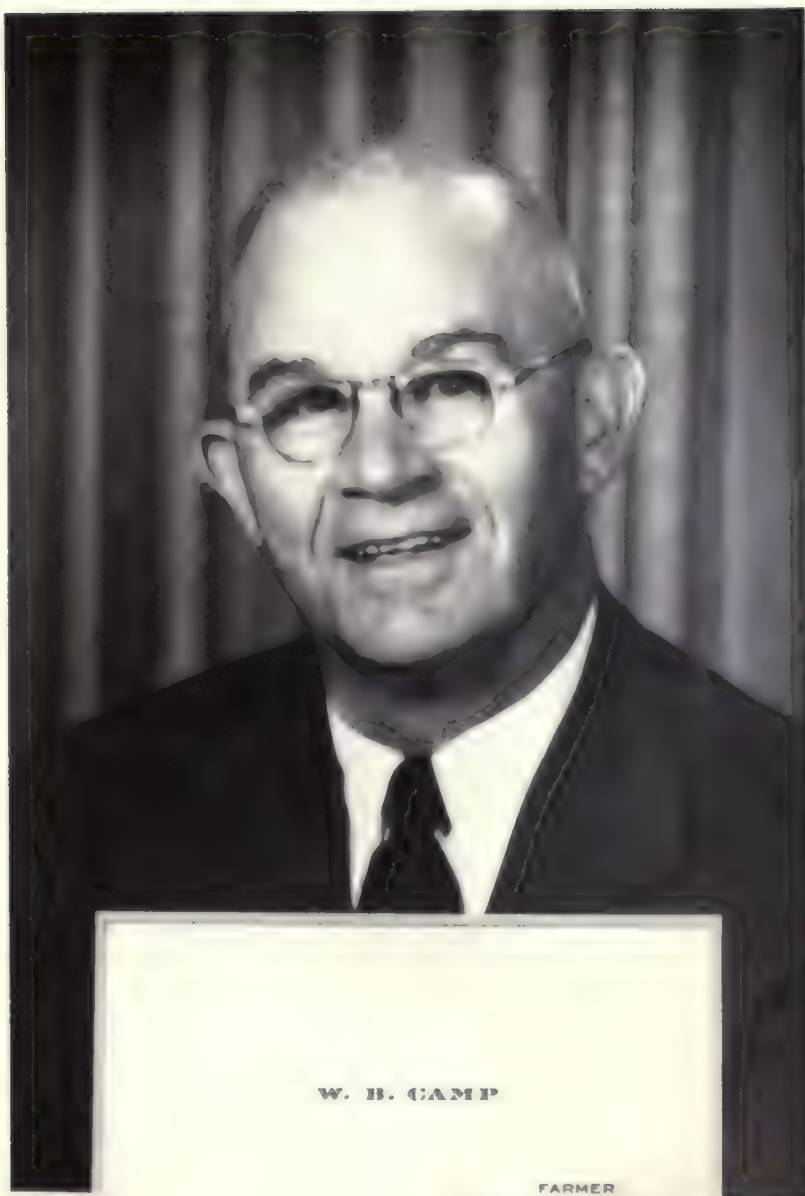
COTTON, IRRIGATION, AND THE AAA

With an Introduction by

Dr. Paul S. Smith
Chancellor, Whittier College

An Interview Conducted by

Willa Klug Baum



W. B. CAMP

FARMER
701 GLEASER AVENUE
BAKERSFIELD, CALIF

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INTRODUCTION

It is a pleasure for me to write an introductory statement for the recorded material of Mr. W. B. Camp in the oral history collection at the University of California Library.

I have known W. B. "Bill" Camp for well over a decade both as an occasional guest in the gracious home of the Camps and through a period of intimate association with him as a valued member of the Board of Trustees of Whittier College.

"Bill" Camp, as he is widely called, is a typical Southern gentleman transplanted to California. The Western hat which he prefers to wear speaks of his California success story and the happiness which he and his wife have found here; his chivalric attitude toward womanhood and his staunch friendship for his business associates reminds one of the good qualities of the Old South which any historically minded person hopes can be preserved in the American culture pattern. In a day of ecology talk and a new national interest in the good earth, it is refreshing to see a man like Bill Camp to whom the land has been good and he good to it -- to note that his business card simply classifies him as "Farmer." This is important in a day when silos are every bit as important as skyscrapers which indeed was precisely the subject of a Commencement address Bill Camp gave on the campus of Whittier College in 1957. What he said then is prophetic today in a nation distressed with problems arising from over-urbanization.

But Bill Camp is not only a Southerner and a Californian, he is above all a blue-blooded patriotic American without being chauvinistic, a rather unusual combination of conviction and tolerance.

However this is no inhibition to his positive expression of notions on the domestic and foreign policies of the nation or his on-the-spot phone calls to his peers across the nation of whom there are many on a first name basis. This has come about because of his extensive business interests in California and South Carolina and through his years of important association with the United States Chamber of Commerce.

I can speak personally of the character of Bill Camp's friendship. It is unfaltering and it is understanding. I know this from my association with him as a member of the Board of Trustees of Whittier College. He takes this assignment seriously, regularly attends meetings whenever in the State, cheerfully accepts assignments, and financially assists special programs of the College. In my experience whenever I needed his help a phone call was only necessary to bring an immediate and positive response.

Bill Camp has made his own way in the world. He understands the validity of the free enterprise philosophy of social organization. He realizes that only a competitive society can develop a capable and disciplined body of human beings providing an appropriate electorate for a viable democracy and a fit reservoir from which its leaders can be chosen. If Mr. Camp's understanding of this is intuitive rather than philosophical I cannot say but he is surely an example of the first being every bit as important as the second. Which makes him all the more important to the oral history program at California.

The character of the man is filled out by his family life. As already indicated, Bill Camp is a Southern gentleman in his family life -- and in his social bearing generally. He is proud of his family, proud and solicitous of his charming wife, an admirer of her notable musical accomplishments both as a singer and instrumentalist, and both are great hosts in their unique Victorian home in Bakersfield which, with its elaborate gardens, is a kind of California setting of an antebellum plantation lay-out.

One must assume that the foregoing characterization of Bill Camp would not be altogether approved by every one. It must be surmised that his forthrightness and directness, and willingness for involvement, would surely bother some insensitive persons of opposing political and economic beliefs -- and some may have been alienated over the years. If such a list exists only Mr. Camp could make it. But we do know that some people do not believe in involvement if it is on "the other side" and are intolerant of its espousal.

I would assume that Bill Camp's life has been no exception to the rule that the rest of us have to live by. But this makes Bill Camp all the more important to oral history, he being of the stature he is.

Dr. Paul S. Smith
Chancellor, Whittier College

18 May 1970
Whittier College
Whittier, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

The following interview with Wofford B. Camp, farmer, was begun in 1961 by the Regional Oral History Office after a canvass of faculty advisors as to which one or two men might best exemplify California agriculture. W. B. Camp was the name that came out on top of every list submitted to us.

This was because first, he had been a pioneer in scientific agriculture; his work for the U.S. Department of Agriculture experiment station led to the now-booming cotton industry in the San Joaquin Valley. Second, he had worked with the Bank of America (then Bank of Italy) during the disastrous agriculture depression of the late 1920's in trying to get agriculture back on its feet. Third, he had become one of the most successful of the new breed of farmers, those who combine dirt-farming, science, and business. And fourth, he had participated very actively in the politics of the state, especially in the campaigns for Nixon and Eisenhower.

Philip Bancroft, another leading California agriculturist, had been interviewed by the Regional Oral History Office and had several times recommended that his friend and fellow farmer Bill Camp could make a valuable addition to the information on agriculture. He was asked to convey the Office's interest in an interview to Mr. Camp, which he did, and it was Mr. Camp's prompt and cooperative reply to Mr. Bancroft that started the interview.

It was only after we got started that we realized we had also a man who could give the inside story of the Cotton Section of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration; Mr. Camp had served in Washington during the most exciting years of the New Deal. On a national agricultural level, he has been instrumental in bringing supplemental irrigation to the Rain-belt states of the South, and in encouraging the diversification of agriculture there. On a national political level, he has participated in efforts to elect or defeat politicians throughout the country, and to get legislation he favored implemented. His work on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Industrial Conference Board has put him in a working relationship with national and international leaders of business and industry.

In addition, Mr. Camp has contributed time and money to educational institutions in California, and his native South Carolina. Mrs. Louis Camp, a farmer in her own right, has been as active as her husband in educational work. And last but not least, we have gotten for the social scientist the story of a farm boy, underprivileged by all traditional measures such as family income and education, family size, and educational

opportunities (but privileged when it came to parental care and training and natural intelligence), who has related his own Horatio Alger story.

Persons Present: Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Camp, and Mrs. Willa Baum.

Time and Setting of the Interviews: The interviews were conducted over a four-year period from July 13, 1962 to July 14, 1966. Interview dates are indicated in the text.

All interviews were held in the Claremont Hotel, Berkeley, where Mr. and Mrs. Camp were registered for the express purpose of the interviews, staying one or two days each visit and interviewing morning and afternoon. Sometimes they brought up scrapbooks or papers relating to the topics to be covered. While Mr. Camp answered questions, Mrs. Camp would sit quietly crocheting, or occasionally checking scrapbooks and adding the exact dates and names of persons at the event under discussion. On one occasion, October 26, 1966, the Camps were joined by Mr. and Mrs. Cully A. Cobb, and the entire day was spent in interviewing Mr. Cobb on his directorship of the Cotton Section of the AAA. That interview, entitled Cully A. Cobb, The Cotton Section of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, 1933--1937, is available in The Bancroft Library and other manuscript depositories.

Conduct of the Interviews: Before each session, Mr. Camp, assisted by Mrs. Camp, refreshed his memory of the topics listed for consideration. His sure, unhesitating manner of speaking indicated that he had sorted out the pieces of the story beforehand and had it well in mind. His opinions were equally clearly expressed (sometimes blunted by the two ladies present), and he pulled no punches either during the interview or later in the editing, nor did he hesitate to indicate what facts had led him to those conclusions.

His spontaneous friendliness and hospitality were well matched by Mrs. Camp's graciousness and warmth; knowing the two of them is the sort of extra dividend that can come to an oral historian.

Editing and
Completion:

Because of the length of the interview and the long period of time over which it was recorded, the interviewer shifted some comments to provide chronological and topical continuity, but otherwise sent the transcript chapter by chapter to Mr. Camp in almost verbatim condition. And the chapters were returned one by one by Mr. Camp with a few corrections here and there to indicate careful reading but with no substantial changes.

The final work also included collecting copies of speeches, newspaper reports, photographs, and other materials relating to California agriculture or Mr. Camp's career, and this was pursued by Mr. and Mrs. Camp with the assistance of Mrs. Mary Daniel, Mr. Camp's secretary. All these collected items have been deposited in The Bancroft Library.

As the interview came to an end, the question of the appropriate colleague to write an introduction arose. It gave the interviewer great pleasure to be able to call on her Whittier College major advisor, Dr. Paul Samuel Smith, professor of American History, then president of Whittier College, and in 1969 Chancellor of the College. Dr. Smith knew Bill Camp well for he had visited the Camp home in Bakersfield when the two of them had worked together in behalf of Whittier College and of Richard Nixon's various candidacies, and they were warm friends and mutual admirers.

Not least in the cooperation from Mr. Camp has been his continuing help in advising on persons and topics for other interviews, and his efforts and very material help in raising funds to continue the research on the history of agriculture.

Willa Klug Baum, Director
Regional Oral History Office

15 February 1971
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University of California at Berkeley

**W. B. CAMP, INC.****701 OLEANDER AVENUE
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA**

Sept. 18, 1961

Mr. Philip Bancroft
Mt. Diablo Fruit Farm
P.O. Box 695
Walnut Creek, California

Dear Phil:

I have never known a more genuinely unselfish and thoughtful man than yourself. Nor have I ever been associated with a man for whom I have been more willing to scratch my fingernails off as I am for you.

For the above reasons and plenty of others I shall be most happy to meet with your friend, Mrs. Baum, in San Francisco the next time we are up there and that is going to be before so very long.

I have a meeting in San Francisco on October 12. Maybe you are attending this same meeting which is known as "Presidents Conferences on Public Affairs" and is sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce of the United States in cooperation with the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce. I am enclosing a brochure which outlines the full day's program. You can see that it is going to be attended by a lot of very important people. If you have not already planned to attend and would like to do so, or perhaps your son would like to attend.

Anyway, Louise and I are going to arrive at the Fairmont Hotel the evening of October 11. I will attend this meeting the next day and then on the 13 or 14 Mrs. Baum and I could arrange to get together. I don't know that I will have anything that will be worthwhile, but certainly she is welcome to any information that I can give her.

AIR MAIL

Mr. Philip Bancroft

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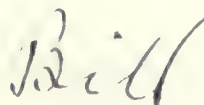
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The American Bankers Association has its annual meeting in San Francisco beginning the evening of the 14th. I can't tell you why, but they asked me sometime ago and I agreed to talk to them Monday morning, October 16.

You and I have always been gluttons for punishment and I am enclosing a copy of a news release that will appear across the country this afternoon. Already I am scheduled to go into meetings next week in Idaho, Oklahoma and Wyoming. Later we will be in other states. Certainly I will need your prayers.

With kindest personal regards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bill".

WBC:md

Enc. 2

CAMP, Wofford Benjamin, farmer; b. Gaffney, S.C., Mar. 14, 1894; s. John Clayton and Mary Jane (Atkins) C.; B.S., Clemson Agrl. Coll., 1916, Dr. Agrl. Industries (hon.), 1951; grad. student U. of California; LL.D. (honorary), Limestone College 1955, Whittier College, 1958; was married to Georgia Anna App, December 14, 1921 (deceased); children—Wofford Benjamin, Donald Max; married 2d, Louise Phifer Wise, January 18, 1956. Charge coop. testing field crops U.S.D.A., S.C., 1916-17; founder cotton, San Joaquin Valley, Cal., 1917; agronomist charge cotton breeding and growing expts., San Joaquin Valley, others, since 1917; established, charge U.S. Expt. Sta., Shafter, Cal., 1922-28; agr. appraiser Bank of Am. Nat. Trust & Savs. Assn., 1929; mgr. Cal. Lands, Inc., Bank Am. subsidiary, 1929-33; head agrl. economist, asst. dir. cotton div. and So. region A.A.A., Washington, 1933-36; pres., owner Georgianna Farms, Inc., 1937-45; president W. B. Camp & Sons, Incorporated, 1946—; co-owner Calolina Farms and Calolina Cotton Ginning Company; author of the California One-variety Cotton law; founder Cal. Cotton Planting Seed Distbrs.; co-founder Cal. Cotton Coop. Assn.; founder Camp Irrigation Fund, S.C., and first to urge large scale conservation of water for irrigation in entire rainfall belt; mem. com. on conservation and development soil and water resources U.S. Department Agr. Founder Georgianna Camp Found. (scholarship); dir. Nat. Rivers and Harbors Congress; trustee Bur. Water Resources, Clemson Alumni Found., Whittier Coll.; gov. Agrl. Hall of Fame; mem. advisory bd. Sch. Bus. Am. Univ. Mem. Kern Co. Potato Seed Association (founder, president), Nat. Potato Council (co-founder, v.p.), Asso. Farmers Cal. (past pres.), Kern Co. Mus. Assn., Am. Cancer Soc. (Cal. dir.), Crippled Children Society, Cal.; U.S. (v.p., treas., dir., v.p., chmn. agrl. com.) C.'s of C., Farm Bur., Phi Kappa Phi, Blue Key, Baptist. Mason. Clubs: Commonwealth (San Francisco); Rotary, Stockdale Golf and Country. Author several agrl. bulls.; contbr. articles mags., newspapers. Home: 701 Oleander Av. Office: P.O. Box 2, Bakersfield, Cal.

FAMILY, CHILDHOOD, AND EDUCATION
(First interview, July 13, 1962)

Family, and Childhood in Cherokee County, South Carolina

Baum: Well, Mr. Camp, I want to start with the earliest beginnings of your family that you know about. Do you know anything about your family history, before your parents?

Camp: Well, I know a little bit about them. There were eight of us children in my family. My father, John Clayton Camp, was one of a large family also, and ahead of him we all descended from a Camp by the name of Thomas, and there's quite a history, genealogy, written up about him. Only recently, a few months ago, I received a letter from a gentleman in Atlanta, Georgia, chairman of the board of a large bank, asking me from whom I was descended and if it was Thomas, why, he and I were kinfolks. His name is Pope Brock.* He later wrote me some more and he said, "Well, we are kinfolks and Thomas Camp is of record as having had more kinfolks than any other living American." He had two wives, first wife had eleven boys and one girl and the second wife had eleven boys and one girl. So if you ask me if I know anything about the beginning of my family I guess I don't need to go further back than that. He came over from England. So we are a family with lots of kinfolks, in the Carolinas and Georgia, Virginia and all through that part of the world.

Baum: As far as you know, were all of your family settled in the southern states?

Camp: Originally, and then some of them migrated from there westward into Texas and some into Illinois. Beyond that I haven't tried to--

Baum: No Yankees in your family?

Camp: Well, I don't know. Anyway, we're very fond of Yankees.

*He was also chief counsel for the parent Coca-Cola Company.

Baum: Your father was a farmer, is that right?

Camp: Yes. He was born on a farm in South Carolina, born in the house that his grandfather built and that was on a piece of land, several hundred acres, that was a grant from the King of England to my ancestors. I was born in the same house. We still own the property. However, at the time I came along-- I mentioned several hundred acres--the War Between the States was fought, a lot of it, in that area, and the march to the sea of the famous general went right through our place and everything was destroyed. And then my folks were left with nothing.

Baum: Had your folks been well-to-do before the war?

Camp: Apparently they had been comfortable, along with other people; how well-to-do by today's measure I can't tell you but certainly they were left less well-to-do after the War Between the States. In fact, they had nothing. My dad said that his existence-- he was thirteen years old when it was over--for the next nine months was entirely on parched corn that they had buried in the field that Sherman didn't find, that and the wild game that they were able to kill. It was all they had left to live on--until more vegetables and other food could be produced.

Baum: Had your father's family been a slave-owning family?

Camp: Apparently they had some, yes. How many I'm not able to say. I do know that quite a number of colored people who had been slaves of the family insisted on staying on--all of them stayed on, none of them left. My mother was made an orphan by the War Between the States and she didn't get to go to school at all.

Baum: She was a local girl there, too?

Camp: Yes.

Baum: After the war your father became a farmer?

Camp: He continued to farm a piece of the same land.

Baum: You said he was only thirteen when the war ended? Did he have any schooling after that?

Camp: He got very little schooling after, I believe he said the third grade. But that was that much more than my mother was able to get. Even so, they did learn to work, how to make a living for themselves.

Baum: What about your father's brothers and sisters? Were they around there too?

Camp: Yes. They were in the general vicinity but they married and moved off on their own.

Baum: Were they all farm people?

Camp: They were originally all farmers, and most of them continued to be farmers but one of the brothers, two of them, I guess, were killed in the War between the States. A lot of people were destroyed during that time, as you know.

Baum: Well, tell me something about your father's farm.

Camp: My grandfather Camp lost the land; because of the war everybody lost the things they had. Shortly after my parents were married they bargained to purchase back a small portion of the original farm, less than one hundred acres; much of that was in woods so that only about half of it was farmed with crops, cotton and corn, wheat, milk cows, chickens, and hogs; we grew everything that we needed to live on. Everybody had milk cows, and I'm very happy to say that my mother insisted on milking the cows herself. I don't mean that I'm happy that she had to milk them but that was one of her pleasures. She wouldn't let anybody else do it when she could to it.

Baum: She must have been a farm girl too.

Camp: Yes, she was. As I say, she was made an orphan by the war, and so she was raised by some of her relatives, bounced around from one place to another until she and my dad got married, and they made a very fine team. Never had any money. He bought this less than a hundred acres for a very small amount of money but only a little down and the rest of it a small amount each year. He paid for it many, many years later. We never had any money but I don't recall that it ever made any of us children unhappy. We didn't know what money was, but we never suffered, we had plenty to eat, plenty of clothes to wear. Most of the clothes my mother made; she carded the cotton and the wool and spun it into thread and made the cloth herself and then made the clothes, and we youngsters helped her to do some of those chores.

Baum: You mentioned eight children; where did you come in?

Camp: Oh, I was the sixth one, I guess; there were two boys after I came along. Three older sisters and two older brothers.

Baum: Was that a large family for those days, or was that average?

Camp: It was an average family; most of our neighbors were, oh, anywhere from twelve to fifteen children. My mother for some reason or other was called on by all the neighbors, both black and white, to bring the children into the world. Of course, all of that was done for the sake of love, no money; never any doctors, because we were out in the country, and all of us were brought into the world by a Negro woman, Negro mammy we called her, without a doctor. The only--as I look back, depressions didn't mean anything to us, to the kids anyway, to my dad maybe it did--but as I recall, the only thing that caused us to suffer was when it didn't rain enough, and then we didn't have enough vegetables in the garden and corn or something in the field to eat, but that was a real tragedy, when it didn't rain.

Baum: You were regular subsistence farmers.

Camp: We were, we were. What little cotton we sold--we grew cotton, but it was only ten to fifteen bales (five hundred pounds per bale) a year and it was sold all the way from seven cents to twelve cents a pound, so you see there never could be much cash at all. All that cash mostly was used for was to pay taxes and buy spices and things that we had to have in the house, and we grew the rest of it.

Baum: We didn't get down your birthdate.

Camp: My birthday? I guess it was about March the 14th, 1894, and my dad, by the way, before I forget it, left me only a few years ago, he was nearly ninety-nine years of age when he passed away.

Baum: Do you know when your father was born? You say he was thirteen at the end of the war; that was 1865.

Camp: About 1850, or 1851. January 10th, I believe. Gaffney, South Carolina. However, we lived four miles out in the country at Camp's Crossroads, and I never considered myself as being from Gaffney. We were from Cherokee County out in the country. We were country folks, and, well, we didn't have occasion to go into town too much--on Saturday afternoons.

Baum: Where did you go to school?

Camp: Out in the country, in a country school, one room, one

Camp: teacher. Possum Trot was the name of the school. Well, the school area had other schools close around, Midway, and Fairview, but Possum Trot is where we first went. And we didn't have-- there was only one teacher, as I say, so we didn't have grades. They just called them readers; we were in first reader, second reader, and when I finished up my last year in the country school I guess I was in the seventh reader maybe, or sixth reader, and then I went for a few months each of two years into Gaffney to a grammar school, part of the seventh grade and part of the eighth grade. That's as far as I went in the country school. I didn't have any high school; I didn't finish the eighth grade.

Baum: Was that because you were required to work on the farm?

Camp: Yes. We had to work early in the spring, we had to plant the crops and we had to be there in the late summer and early fall to harvest the crops, so during that time we could not be in school.

Baum: This applied to you and your brothers.

Camp: All of us. My mother learned to read and write after she had raised all eight of us and during her spare time she worked out in the field with the rest of us helping to plant, chop, pick cotton and other crops. We all worked together. But then following that she did learn to read and write, and I now know that she was one of the best educated women I've ever known--in the arts of completely independent living. There was nothing she couldn't do and help others do.

Baum: What did she look like?

Camp: Very much like my present sweetheart here, Louise. She was a small woman, to me very beautiful. What else do you expect me to say? Always happy, a pleasant smile, made everybody else happy, even though she was working all the time. All the time. But that didn't seem to bother her; she had good health.

Baum: Who was the boss in your house? Your mother or your father?

Camp: They were a very wonderful team, and I don't know that I could say that either one of them was boss. They had the responsibilities and each helped the other.

Baum: Was your father a lenient man or stern?

Camp: He was rather stern. Fortunately, as I look back. With eight

Camp: kids I guess you have to be rather stern at times, yet he was always very considerate and understanding. You might think--I mentioned a while ago that Dad said he lived for nine months on nothing but corn and the wild game that he could kill--that he would be bitter toward President Lincoln and the army, bitter at losing the slaves and so on, but to the contrary, he was one of the most lenient men and always one of the first to say: "Lincoln was one of the best friends that the South ever had, and had he not been assassinated the South never would have suffered all the hardships that it did during the Reconstruction period." And also he was very happy that the Negro people were freed from slavery.

Baum: He was a Democrat, I assume.

Camp: Well, he was born and raised in South Carolina, and to be anything else but a Democrat down there following the War between the States would have been almost to commit suicide or subject yourself to murder, or isolation from society and ridicule by all.

Baum: It sounds as though maybe his family didn't believe in slavery, even though they held slaves.

Camp: I don't think many of the people, certainly none of my friends and neighbors in the South, as I recall back in my early days or even now, none of them believed in it.

Baum: You mean the people you knew around you didn't think slavery was a good thing? This is after it was abolished.

Camp: Of course, I didn't know anything about it during that time, and my dad was also rather young, but all of his memories led him to believe, to know that it was not good for the white people nor the Negro people either, but it was something that got started and somebody had to stop it, so it was Lincoln's job to do it.

Baum: Did your father take any part in politics, local politics?

Camp: Only in his community and county, he was very outspoken on who he thought was the better of two candidates, and always based on principle rather than personalities. He never took part in it from the standpoint of personalities at all. It was the issues that were involved.

Baum: Did he ever talk about William Jennings Bryan?

Camp: Yes; he naturally thought that William Jennings Bryan was a great man. Whether he was or not is not for me to say, but again all the people down there were Democrats, and you wouldn't expect them to be thinking otherwise.

Baum: Was your father religious?

Camp: Yes, very religious. Mother too. Baptists. Never had a meal without saying the blessing, always went to Sunday school and church on Sunday, and during the week whenever it was convenient they also went; if there was a church service they would like they went to it.

Baum: The church was not too far away, then.

Camp: No. A couple of miles, and that wasn't very far; it was walking distance, or we could drive a mule or something.

Baum: How were you punished when you were bad? Or weren't you ever bad?

Camp: Yes, I was punished twice by my dad. My mother would scold me, but the greatest punishment we ever got from her was to have her look at us as though she was displeased. That hurt us much worse than if she'd have just taken a switch and switched us. But my dad, well, on two occasions, one time with a shingle, he paddled me pretty hard. I guess I had neglected, or he thought that I had neglected to do some of my duties--so it was reported by one of the brothers. And then on another occasion my pride, I guess, got the best of me; I didn't have any overcoats or topcoats or anything, and it was cold one morning going down to Possum Trot School, and all of them had gone, and they wanted me to wear a cape, I guess you'd call it, a shawl or cape, belonged to my mother. A velvet cape, I believe it was. Anyway, it came down to about my waist, to keep off the rain and the cold weather. I had too much pride to wear a woman's garment, even though I was only about twelve years old or something. So he took a little riding whip hanging there on the porch and he paddled me pretty hard--and I wore it! Kids just didn't have extra clothes.

Baum: Did you have any sheep for wool?

Camp: No, we didn't have any, but we would manage to trade something to get a little wool. There was a great swapping of things. You'd trade chickens with a neighbor for something, or trade

Camp: some eggs or milk or butter. My mother always put up butter that folks in town liked; she was a pretty good cook, I guess. I thought so and apparently others did too. They were very anxious to get some of her butter and milk and eggs every week, so that was pin money that she had to buy little needed things.

Baum: Was there any special day that people would swap, anything like the European fair days?

Camp: No. But Saturday noon, unless there was a terrible emergency in the field, everybody quit work and went to town to do their shopping, or to visit. In my case mostly to visit, more than anything else, to see folks from around the neighborhood. The colored people didn't want to work on Saturday afternoon at all, so--.

Baum: They worked for the other people, is that right?

Camp: Well, they had some of their own crops too. One of our neighbors, in fact, what we called our nigger mammy, her husband was a Baptist preacher and he owned a piece of land close to us, adjoining us, and many a day I worked on their farm, many, many days. Forty cents a day, I remember. And I would eat my lunch--we called it dinner then--at noontime in their house; she would fix a place on a little table in the kitchen or dining room--really their eating table was in the kitchen--and she'd fix up a little table for me. Not that I asked for it, but that's what she did, and she was as clean as--she worked over in our house a lot, one of the family almost.

Actually my parents at first bargained for only about seventy-five acres of the old homestead. About the same time a Negro preacher by the name of A. Norris bargained to buy about sixty acres of the old Camp homestead adjoining the parcel my parents bought.

All of this land was about the same from the standpoint of productiveness.

I guess Reverend Norris was a good preacher but a pretty sorry farmer. After a few years Norris wanted my folks to buy a portion of his farm. After another fifteen or twenty years of preaching-farming he sold my folks another parcel of land. This gave us a total of 110 acres and left the preacher with 25 acres.

Even this was more than he wanted to work.

Camp: The minister's wife was named Mealie. Everyone called her Aunt Mealie. She was a very fine Christian soul and we loved her very much. She spent much time in our home and she is the one who brought me into the world.

After the preacher died, Aunt Mealie was left alone. Their two daughters had married and moved away.

By this time I had been in California many years, but I kept in touch with Aunt Mealie and always when I went home (nearly every year) I spent some time visiting with her.

A few years before Aunt Mealie passed away she had my oldest brother, Willie, write and ask me to buy her home and the twenty-five acres--said she wanted me to own it. I'm happy we were able to pay her more than the asking price. We also insisted that arrangements were made for someone to live with her.

This is now a part of our old home place. Aunt Mealie's home is being kept and a picture of it adorns the wall in my office, just below the picture of our old home as it was nearly two hundred years ago.

Baum: To get back to your own activities, what were your duties around your house?

Camp: Each kid had certain chores. Mine was all of the wood, for the stove and the fireplace. I had to cut it, carry it in, keep enough ahead. Every kid knew exactly what he was to do.

Baum: And every kid did what he was supposed to do?

Camp: Oh yes, without any--well, kids are kids, but if you didn't do it today you had to do it tomorrow. And somebody reported them or something. [Laughing] But many a morning I'd been "waked up," Dad would call and say, "Come on down, let's fix breakfast. Your mother was called out last night, a new baby somewhere."

Baum: So the wood was your duty. Did you ever help in the planting?

Camp: Oh yes. Ha! When I was talking about duties, those were after work hours.

Baum: Well, what did you do on the farm in your work hours?

Camp: Every single thing there was to do, from the breaking of the land, preparing the seed beds, planting the crops, spreading of the fertilizer--some of it was commercial fertilizer we'd buy in sacks and we'd have to put that out by hand. Also, we'd have to clean up the cow barn and the horse barn and we'd haul that out in the wagon to the field, and this may sound very crude to some people, make them shudder, but we'd rip open a sack, tie it around our waist, fill it with manure and walk down the field spreading the manure for whatever crop it might be. Today we have machines. And then when the crops came up we had to care for them, hoe them, cultivate them; then if there was a drought we'd stand by and watch them dry up. There was no irrigation back there, even though we had streams going by. We didn't know what irrigation was.

Baum: Did you have any draft animals?

Camp: We had horses and mules, and as kids, we came along, more of us, and we cultivated a little bit more land and we didn't have enough animals to do it so I had a pet bull, Old Black Joe, belonged out in the herd of cows, (never more than five) but he and I became good friends and I broke him to drive to a buggy, to a wagon, and to a plow, and then for a couple of years I plowed Old Joe in the fields, just like the rest of them plowing with horses and mules.

Baum: I didn't know you could train a bull to do that.

Camp: Very, very well. He understood when I said, "Gee," to go to the right and when I said, "Haw," he would go to the left. He understood it just the same as the horses. You didn't have to have lines on him at all. But that sounds like I was working under very great hardships and I guess I was, but I have never had happier days in my life--couldn't have more fun than I had during all that time. And so did my brothers and sisters. We didn't know what it was to be unhappy because we didn't have money, nor because we had to work. We had ourselves, we had each other, we had our neighbors, and we had lots of fun. All of us worked hard, but Saturday afternoon and Sunday, and then during the rainy days we couldn't work much, so we got together and had fun.

Then part of July and always August was a time when everybody went to the big meeting, we called it, for each church out in the country would have two weeks that they would have every day a meeting and every night, win new converts and so on. It was taken very seriously, yet it was a

Camp: time of--a wonderful time, wonderful occasion, families all over the neighborhood getting together and discussing the real meaning of life and what we could do about it.

Baum: Was this meeting close enough to go every day or did you go and stay there?

Camp: We went every day. It was only about two miles away. The one church would have it for two weeks or maybe ten days and then a neighboring church, maybe two or three miles away from that one, would have it for another two weeks and we'd go to that one too, quite often, but we'd every day go to our own church when meetings were being held. It was during one of those summer sessions when I was probably, I've forgotten exactly, twelve to fifteen years old, I joined Grassy Pond Church and was baptized out in the creek in the pasture, where the cattle were running. They let down the wire fence to get into the pasture and be baptized. But that was a regular occurrence; there were no facilities in the church at that time for baptizing.

Baum: What did you do for recreation in your family?

Camp: Well, during these same summer sessions the same churches would also conduct singing schools nearly every summer, and that was a time of all of them getting together in a more hilarious manner but yet to learn to sing, and we sang together. We played baseball, and we swam. We did all of the things that folks do nowadays--.

Baum: You played baseball; was this with your own brothers?

Camp: Yes, and with the neighbors. We had regular little teams, always in somebody's pasture. Didn't have any baseball diamonds except, as I say, in somebody's pasture.

Baum: Did you go hunting?

Camp: Oh yes, rabbits and birds, quail, and squirrels and possums. We went fishing a lot.

Baum: What did your father and mother do for fun?

Camp: Raised kids and had to work most of the time, and they had fun with the kids; the raising of these youngsters was a lot of fun to them. All played together. On the Fourth of July every year, everybody quit work and went for an all-day

Camp: celebration, usually held at nearby Limestone Springs, and there they would have games, climbing of the greasy pole, and the lamb race for the girls and the greasy pig race for the boys, potato races and sack races and all kinds of things. Everybody went and you had an all-day celebration and it was wonderful. But that served not just to get you away from your farm work but we mingled with all of these other good people in the county and again, as I say, learned a fuller meaning of life itself.

On one occasion--on two occasions at one of these Fourth of July celebrations when I was twelve or thirteen years old, they threw these sacks out and whoever caught them could run in this half-mile race around the circle. Also they had bicycle races. Well, I caught a sack and I crawled in that sack and then a bunch of us took off for half a mile, and I came in for some reason as the winner and I won a dollar. I took that dollar and bought me a little heifer calf--it cost two dollars--from a neighbor. The next year, on the Fourth of July, we went to the same place, same celebration, they had a sack race and again I caught a sack and again I was the successful sack racer, and that gave me my second dollar and I went back and paid for my little calf then in full, and pretty soon, the next year she was a cow, and that cow, the money I sold her for and got was a little nest egg that helped me later on. I kept everything I got and it helped me get started on to Clemson College when I went.

Baum: You said occasionally you could make a little money working for the neighbors too.

Camp: Yes. Forty cents a day when day work. Picking cotton was paid for by the pound, twenty to twenty-five cents in the early days. When we'd finish ours we'd pick for neighbors, or if we hadn't finished they'd pick for us, and these neighbors, whether black or white, it would make no difference, we'd all work in the same fields together and enjoyed it very much. In the harvesting of cotton I became pretty good and actually was considered the champion cotton picker in my part of the country. My dad promised all the kids he'd give them a dollar if they picked a hundred pounds of cotton in one day, before the tenth birthday was over. Well, I got my dollar when I was nine years old. I always liked to pick cotton, no hardship at all.

Baum: When was it that you were the champion cotton picker?

Camp: Well, that was at the time when I was just getting ready to go to Clemson.

Baum: I wonder if you could paint a picture of a typical day in your family. It's hard for me to imagine this big family of children.

Camp: At the crack of dawn, before the crack of dawn, about five o'clock, no matter what the day was or time of year, my dad himself got up, and first he would go in the kitchen and make a fire in the wood stove, and when he'd come back, why, he'd go on out then and feed the horses, mules, and when he'd go out and do that my mother would go into the kitchen to start breakfast, and then of course when the girls were there, they got big enough, they'd come down and help cook the breakfast. We boys then just a few minutes later--because none of this took long--we'd hear Dad's footstep on the bottom step of the stairs and he'd say, "It's time to get up," and out we'd jump. We never hesitated. Dressed quickly, came down, washed our face, went in the kitchen. Usually we ate in the kitchen unless we had company, then we'd go into an adjoining room we called the dining room.

Baum: You had a two-story house, is that right?

Camp: Yes.

Baum: Did all you boys share one room and the girls another?

Camp: Well, the boys and girls didn't sleep in the same room but we had to scatter all over the house, upstairs and downstairs. Two stories wasn't a very big house. There were three small rooms upstairs and two bedrooms downstairs.

We'd eat breakfast all together, have fun kidding each other and so on, out we'd go then, whatever the field work was we scattered, picked up our end of it, and off we'd go. Right at that time when we'd leave the breakfast table to go out usually right then my mother would go to the cow barn to milk the cow, but quite often she would get the jump on us and would slip up there and milk her one or two cows before breakfast. Again I want to emphasize that she didn't look upon that as a chore, she loved it, and she did it until she passed away at the age of seventy-six. And she wasn't sick then except pneumonia for just a few days and then she was gone. But she wouldn't let anybody else do it (the milking) whenever she was there. She just wanted to do it.

Baum: I take it this was in the summer you're talking about.

Camp: Excepting occasionally when there was snow on the ground and so on. In wintertime we had to cut all of the wood over in the woods and bring it in, or cut it and let it be drying during the next few months for burning the following year. There was always something to be doing, kept us busy. And also--peanuts for instance--we grew peanuts not so much for sale but we ate a lot of them. We'd harvest them and stack them in the shed and then during the rainy spell or during the winter we would pick them off of the vine. That kept us busy part of the time. Always something to do.

Baum: You were one of the little ones then.

Camp: I was for a while, and then at the age of fifteen I took charge of our farm. I was the oldest one then; my brother just older than I, I believe got married at seventeen years of age and that left me the oldest one there and I was looked upon to lead the work. Again that was no hardship, but pleasure.

Baum: If you worked until noon did you stay out wherever you were in the fields to eat lunch?

Camp: Always came to the house to eat lunch. At that time it seemed like a long ways in, but as I look at it now a hundred acres is just a little patch of ground and the house was pretty much in the center. It really wasn't far. But my mother at noon-time would blow a horn, either one of two horns she had. One was a cow's horn that had been fixed up so it would blow, fox horn, and the other one she used more; she used a conk horn, and she'd blow that. Well, we'd hear that and the horse or mule, or my bull, whatever we were plowing if we were plowing, would hear it and know what it would mean and they would, my bull would "Moo!" and off we'd go. If we were headed away from home, we'd go out to the end and then we'd turn around and go back and go to the house. My bull, I'd ride him in to the house, water him, put him up and feed him. Twelve o'clock, one o'clock came, back out to the fields and then we'd work until dark. Always from "Kin (see) till Kan't." We worked as long as we could see. Can see till you can't see. I'll let you spell it.

Baum: And then you'd come in to dinner (supper then) at dark?

Camp: Oh yes. Everybody, not just us. All of our neighbors who were thrifty. There were a lot of people who weren't thrifty. But all of them who were thrifty did pretty much the same way.

Camp: And we didn't look upon that as a hardship.

Baum: At that time I imagine all you would do was eat dinner and go to bed.

Camp: We did; we ate, washed our feet in the washtub--there was no bathroom--we'd go outside the house and wash in the wash-tub, and climb in bed immediately and go right to sleep of course. Felt like it.

Baum: You didn't have to worry about recreation.

Camp: We had recreation. We were healthy in every sense, all eight members. I don't remember a day's sickness for any one of the eight while we were growing up--except measles and other child's diseases.

Baum: Were you particularly close to any of your brothers and sisters?

Camp: All of us were pretty close while we were growing up. I always looked upon my oldest brother who is ten years older than I--and I still do--as just about the ideal sort of a fellow that I wanted to be. He lives in South Carolina now.

Baum: Did you tag along with him?

Camp: Well, I would tag along with him before I was big enough to work. Then when I got big enough to work you tag along with yourself. You did your own chores.

Baum: Did any particular sister act as a second mother?

Camp: Well, they were all very kind, all had to work in the fields. All of us were together, but my sister who's just four years older than I, I guess maybe was a little closer to me than the others. I remember one of these Fourth-of-July's we were talking about. It happened to be the year before I won the first sack race. She had done some sewing or something for some neighbors and had made a few dollars, certainly very, very few, but she knew I only had ten cents to go to the Fourth of July celebration with, and for some reason she wanted to give me twenty-five cents and she did and I took it and spent most of it, I guess. But anyhow that always endeared her to me. I never forgot that. Some few years ago I took that twenty-five cents and compounded it at 8 per cent interest semi-annually from the beginning until this particular year and I wrote a check and gave it to her

Camp: young son. You'd be surprised, it was rather sizeable. I've forgotten how much it was, but I never forgot it.

Baum: Am I right in gathering that rather than being particularly close to any one or two people that you were a close communal group?

Camp: That's right. And all of us very close to Mother and Dad, always.

Baum: If you felt very badly about something, blue or depressed, would you go off alone or would you go to some brother or sister?

Camp: I don't recall confiding in that manner with any of them. We'd just talk it over openly, in wintertime sitting around before the open fire, eating parched peanuts or corn that we had parched on the fire, having fun. It was fun, too. This is not the same as what you're talking about, but I remember one Sunday afternoon a bunch of us boys, I guess I must have been twelve or fifteen, we slipped off into the pasture, no one saw us, but a bunch of us played baseball Sunday afternoon and had lots of fun. We had been taught that we should do our baseball playing on week days and on Sunday we'd go to Sunday school and church, which we did and enjoyed it, but unless the ox was in the ditch, an emergency of some kind, we were not to actually labor. We had been told that playing baseball was in that same category. So that evening when I got home, when I got in bed it all dawned on me that I had committed a sin, a great sin, and I guess the most I ever cried and prayed for anything that I'd done was then, as a youngster. Today of course you don't think of that.

Baum: I suppose your family was opposed to dancing and smoking.

Camp: Of course, no girl smoked at that time, and none of our brothers did. None of them smoked in the family, but my dad chewed tobacco. He said he learned to chew tobacco when he was a kid--they grew tobacco, and some of the Negro boys would have tobacco on them they'd be chewing and he told them he'd bring them some hot biscuits if they'd bring him some chewing tobacco, so he got started chewing tobacco that way and he chewed all his life. Several times he tried to quit and did and he'd get a little bit fussy and my mother would go and buy some tobacco and slip it in his pocket, and she'd say, "You go to chewing tobacco." That's how close they were.

Baum: Did your family allow dancing?

Camp: Square dancing. They didn't know anything about what you call ballroom dancing, and I didn't either until I came to California after I graduated from college. But hillbilly dancing, square dancing, we grew up on it, and in the winter-time--never in the summer, we had too much work to do and it was too hot anyway--that was one of the greatest pleasures we had, the young people; it was always in somebody's home, go to some neighbor's home and you'd have a square dance and the music would be, I guess you'd call it hillbilly music today, but it was a banjo and a fiddle, that's all, and it was good. But I grew up square dancing and I loved it. They said I was pretty good too.

Folks in town looked down on us because we did that. It's only been in recent years now that people have considered square dancing dignified, but we in the country thought that ballroom dancing was just kind of a hugging party. That was the impression I had as a youngster.

Baum: It sounds like it was a large enough town to have people who weren't farmers.

Camp: It was a very small town but the town itself, the people there, as it was in most of those town, had cotton mills and some of the town people had a little money and they didn't visit too much with the folks who did the actual farming.

Baum: Was there a feeling that they felt they were a little better than the farmers?

Camp: That's right. There was no animosity on the part of the farm people, but they felt it, they felt it. It really was a rather unfortunate situation, I guess, but I think the same thing was true in many other small towns like that.

Baum: I know that for many years there was a great animosity between the farmer and the city folk but I didn't know that that included the small town people.

Camp: Well, some of these small town people thought they were big city people, so I personally--well, for instance, I had a lot of kinfolks in town and I remember one Sunday a lady, kinfolks, brought about five or six girls out to the country and spent the day with us, all day Sunday. We played down in the pasture under the sweetgum tree--you call it the

Camp: liquid amber out here in California--we played housekeeping and everything else and they had lots of fun and took lots of eats back to town with them that my mother had given them out of the garden and so on. But a week or two later I was in town on Saturday afternoon and I had put on some long trousers, hand-me-down trousers from one of my older brothers, and I'd rolled them up to make them fit me, but they were clean and had a good crease in them--I'd cleaned them and pressed them myself. As I walked out of the buggy and was walking up the street I saw four of these little girls across the street looking and pointing and snickering at me, and it just went right through me, went right through me. I determined then and there that someday I was going to be able to walk with my head up and with another kind of a pair of trousers on and so on. But whether it hurt me or spurred me on I can't tell you, but I never got over it. In other words, out in the country I was good enough for them to have fun playing with out there, but when they got in town they snickered at me.

Baum: And that was sort of a general feeling of the town folks?

Camp: I'm not so sure it was. Maybe. I think it was, at that time.

Baum: Did you have any other relatives that came over often?

Camp: Oh, we had lots of visitors. Every weekend. We didn't call it weekend, we didn't know what that meant, but we'd call it Saturday afternoon and Sunday. We'd have somebody in the house all the time, never announced, never know who's coming, but it might be one or two or four or five come and spend Saturday night and all day Sunday. Or we might pick up and go three or four miles and spend the night with somebody. They wouldn't know we were coming, but that was just living.

Baum: Do you remember any particular events that occurred?

Camp: Yes, a lot of them, but just off hand I think of one. I arrived home one afternoon, some of us had been down at the creek playing, and I was quite young but old enough that I still remember--a man had been killed and he'd been right out in the road close to our house and they brought him in, and it turned out that it was two fellows who had been drunk and one killed the other one, shot him. We were right on the road, Camp's Crossroad, the road going both directions, so quite often we would see people who had been to town--don't like to use the term, but it's what we did call them--"poor white trash." They were no poorer moneywise than we

Camp: were but anyway they spent every nickel they could get hold of, most of it for whiskey or something going home, probably had no groceries, nothing, to take to their families, but that made an impression on me that I never forgot, made me know that I didn't want any whiskey, and as a result of seeing that I've never yet tasted whiskey.

Baum: Was it part of your family's religion not to drink?

Camp: No, no, not at all. As a matter of fact, to show you how broad-minded my mother was, she didn't drink and didn't like folks to drink, but on the other hand when I went off to Clemson I said, "Mama, I promise you I'll never take a drink." I don't know why I did it, I don't know why I said it, but anyway I was leaving home for the first time, had never been away, and many years after I finished Clemson we were talking about something and I told her about that and she said, "Now, I don't want you to think that you have to stick by that at all. If with your friends and so on you want to take a drink with them, that's up to you, but you have no obligation to me."

Baum: Would she have disapproved?

Camp: Yes, she would have disapproved.

Baum: I get the feeling that if she'd have disapproved she wouldn't have had to say anything; you wouldn't have done it.

Camp: That's right. She preferred that none of us do it, but she didn't want us to feel that we were tied to her apron strings and had to do exactly what she wanted. That's the point. She was happy when we didn't, but as I told you when my dad tried to quit chewing and he was getting a little bit cross after two or three weeks or something, and she'd go down and buy him a plug of tobacco and slip it in his pocket and say, "Here. You go ahead, I know you like it, and she'd smile and pat him on the shoulder. Really, that's true love. And they were just like my wife's mother and dad are now, exactly the same type of feeling between them.

Baum: Are there any other events you remember, like the Fourth of July?

Camp: Well, those were great events. We would drive our wagon down four miles to the town limit and then there was a little dummy engine, a train there, that hauled limestone out, so we would tie up our team in order to ride the next mile on that little dummy train. That was a great event.

Camp: I remember we drove twenty miles to take some wheat to a mill to be ground, and while over there we decided to spend the night with an uncle, and the streetcar was running next morning. I went out and wanted to take a streetcar ride, never had been on one, so I got on and the conductor found out that I'd never ridden one so he wouldn't let me pay the five-cent fare and that made an impression on me. In other words, he was wanting to do something for me as a gift, and I thought it was nice.

Another thing I remember that wasn't so nice was a public hanging.

Dad bundled us up with hot brick, hot rocks I guess it was, in the bottom of the buggy, and we drove for twenty miles on a very cold morning over to Shelby, North Carolina, to see a ten o'clock hanging of a man, a Negro man, who had murdered a woman or something. It was out in the public square, the courthouse yard, which they used to do at that time, and that was the last public hanging they had over there. I'll never forget that. My dad had told us on the way over, and we knew a little before, the terrible crime that he'd committed, and naturally so far as I'm concerned there's nothing too bad can happen to a man, or a woman either, no matter what the color of their skin or who they are, if they go in and do some of these terrible cruel things, why, as far as I'm concerned if they can be got out of the world that way the world will be better off. Now, I know that may not sound Christian--.

Baum: But how did you feel when you saw it? Or did it make much impression?

Camp: Oh yes, it did. I can't tell you how I felt. It made a lasting impression. And I don't want to see another one; I don't want to see another one. Not because I don't want them put out of the way, but I just don't want to see it.

When I was quite young, in school, I learned about the Ku Klux Klan and I was reading these books in school that were written mostly by somebody who didn't know the real conditions, and it was saying how terrible the Ku Klux Klan was. Well, it made me kind of ashamed of the fact that my dad became a Ku Klux man in his young days--as I say, he was around twenty or something, then later on he had to leave the state, or did leave the state, went up into Tennessee for a year or so, then came back--but when I got older and knew exactly what the conditions were and why the Ku Klux Klan came into being as it was there during

Camp: those years, I would have been completely ashamed of him had he not been one of them, because all it was was protecting their homes and the womenfolks and the children, and any man who is a man is certainly going to try to protect his home.

Baum: Did your father tell you he belonged to the Ku Klux Klan?

Camp: Oh yes. We talked about it a lot. I belonged to the Masonic Lodge. You may belong to some club and you have some things that just belong there. Well, he never told a living soul, that is, unless it was somebody who was with him during that era. I don't know. But certainly no one on the outside did he ever tell anything what he did or had to do, but whatever he did it was in defense of their homes, womanhood and so on, and I'm proud of him. I'd have been ashamed of him if he hadn't done it.

Baum: Did he know what you thought about it before and what you thought about it later? Did he try to explain it to you?

Camp: Oh yes, we talked about it in detail, talked about it the last time he was out in California when he was ninety-six or something, quite a bit. Some lady, a neighbor, was asking a lot of things, she heard, I'd told her that he'd been in the Ku Klux Klan, but not the present day Klan, and they got to questioning him, and he was very witty, very witty, and quick too. He said, "No, no, no. Not like this today. This is awful, this is terrible, this is exactly what we weren't--." And then they'd try to lead in to a leading question quickly and get him to say something the Ku Klux did, and he'd say, "Oh no, oh no."

Baum: He wouldn't talk about their activities.

Camp: Not to me, not to anybody. His oath was his oath. I never saw a paper, a lease, a written agreement between neighbors until I came to California. You just don't need them between good people back there. If you promise to do something, tomorrow or next year, or ten years, it's just as good as if it's written down. Nobody thinks about backing out on it.

Baum: The Ku Klux Klan arose again in the 1920's, didn't it?

Camp: I don't know what year it was, but he was furious about it, he was just furious, because they did it trying to say they were the same thing as what they were in the 1860's or '70s, but they weren't. It was vilifying the original thing, and he didn't like it. I look upon his activity in that just the same as I do my own activity in Associated Farmers in

Camp: California, beginning back in the '30's and on up through for fifteen years or more. All we were organized for and all we tried to do and did do was fight communists. And yet we were vilified, raked over the coals by lots of people all over America, but only because the guilty people kept building fires and agitating and telling lies, but our purpose all of the time was just one thing: fighting communism.

Baum: But you're not carrying this analogy farther, to say that the Associated Farmers now are not the same, are you?

Camp: No, no. I'm saying that the original Ku Klux Klan was organized for as fine and honorable a purpose as anyone could organize for. If men aren't willing and ready to organize or to defend their homes, whether it's through an organization or not, they aren't much men. And that's just what that was. And it wasn't, as I said to you before, just against the freed slaves at all, the bad agitating colored people, because most of them were just as wonderful as could be, but it was the agitating carpetbaggers who came down as, in the same manner, the agitators going down, these so-called "freedom riders" today. All outside agitation. Maybe that won't be good for your book, but nevertheless that's my sentiment.

Baum: Tell me a little bit about your grammar school--there was one room?

Camp: One room and one teacher.

Baum: For how many students?

Camp: That depended. Some of those one-room schools would be sixty, seventy-five kids. At Possum Trot I think probably forty or fifty kids mostly, and you have them from the first reader--we'd never heard of kindergarten--on up through as high as the sixth reader, and when I was in the sixth reader the teacher would be absent sometimes and since I was in the highest reader the teacher would ask me to substitute teach. So I taught for several days when he would be out, even though I was a student there. We sat on long benches, hard benches--there were not desks of any kind, high-backed benches. They weren't very comfortable.

I have a scar on my finger that was gotten right in front of Possum Trot School. We were playing snowball and somebody evidently put, I don't know what, a little rock or something inside the snowball and I caught it. It didn't break the skin but it bruised it and there's always been the scar there.

Baum: You had some fun there, too.

Camp: Oh, we had lots of fun.

Baum: Did you like school?

Camp: Very much, very much. When school was out in the spring, also for Christmas, the last day of school before Christmas the teacher, who probably was being paid twenty-five or thirty dollars a month, she was expected to and did with pleasure, bring boxes of stick candy and gave one or two sticks to each of the kids. We played ball at school, many different things. The next thing to golf--I never have yet played golf, but as I recall we did something that was the next thing to golf, we did it with sticks, though. We'd break the stick down and have a large stick to hit with and take another one and put one down and hit it, knock it up in the air and knock it off. We didn't call it golf, I've forgotten what we called it. We made our fun, we had fun.

Baum: Was your discipline severe in school?

Camp: It had to be. Yes, it was severe, but the teacher didn't have to do much but just look at us. She had a hickory in the corner back there.

Baum: She didn't use it very often?

Camp: Oh yes, occasionally; there were some naughty kids quite often.

Baum: A woman teacher usually?

Camp: Always. For two reasons: she'd board with a family nearby the school to become a part of the community, know a little more about it, and also it was cheaper to do that. She'd only pay ten dollars or twelve dollars a month for board. Of course, that was a big percentage out of a thirty-five dollar salary.

Baum: Was she usually a young woman?

Camp: Usually a young woman.

Baum: You say you didn't go to high school, because it was in town?

Camp: I went, from this one teacher's school, for part of three years (I said two years a while ago); I went four or five miles into Gaffney to a grammar school because the teacher out there felt that I had gone so far that if I could get better schooling in town, why, I'd better do it. Consequently I enrolled at Central Grade School in Gaffney. I went there part of the sixth grade, part of the seventh grade, and part of the eighth. When I say a part I mean I had to help pick the cotton before I could go in the fall

Camp: and stop and help plant in the spring, so I'd miss three months of each of those years. In other words, I only went six months out of the nine months. In the eighth grade I lacked a month finishing the eighth grade, and then I took an examination the following summer and was for some reason or other admitted to Clemson.

Baum: Were you a good student?

Camp: I don't know. You mean at Clemson--?

Baum: No, I mean in grammar school.

Camp: Well, I studied hard. I had lots of fun.

Baum: Did you enjoy studying? Did you enjoy school work?

Camp: Very much. I read everything I could get hold of. But we couldn't get hold of much at my home.

Baum: Did you have any books there?

Camp: Very few. We had our Bible which we studied regularly. We also had a large dictionary which I also consulted almost every day.

Baum: And no library, I suppose.

Camp: None at all. We had a few old history books which were quite interesting. We also had the basic books then used in the country schools. Also there were books friends might bring in or somebody would give us or lend us. Every month we received a copy of Hoard's Dairyman--a farm magazine. This became my farm bible. Whatever I could get to read, why--I read. I've forgotten in what book, but I read something about Benjamin Franklin and I liked the way it sounded, what he had done for the world, and I didn't have a middle name, so I wanted an initial. W. Camp didn't sound good. The Wofford was named after Wofford College at a nearby town, Spartanburg, South Carolina. So I decided that, I asked my mother and dad if they would object if I gave myself the name Benjamin: W. B. I had a great uncle who was a judge who was a W. D., and that sounded good and B. was close to it.

Baum: What did your older brothers and sisters do? I want to know what they did before you went to college; you said one got married.

Camp: My oldest brother went to Clemson two years and he was quite a football player, one of the best, I guess, they ever had, and they tried to get him to continue but he and his little girl friend, a neighbor out there in the country, decided they'd get married and they did. So he's the only one who ever went to college. One of my sisters went to a boarding school which was really a glorified high school, and one of my brothers went a little while to a boarding school, but I'm the only one who went on to finish college.

Baum: What did the others do?

Camp: Farmed. All farmed.

Baum: There wasn't room for them on your father's farm, I wouldn't think.

Camp: No. They all got off and rented and then bought farms of their own.

Baum: They started out by renting?

Camp: That's the way.

Baum: So your brothers all went into farming. And your sisters--?

Camp: Married farmers also, all of them married farmers.

Baum: Was this what your father and mother expected of their children?

Camp: No. Well, they were happy that they did it, but I don't know whether they had a goal or expected any particular thing of any one of us, but they were happy that we did that. A lot of our neighbors, some of the boys and some of the girls, were going to different things, and it was just the way the ball bounced.

Baum: I know many families now, parents have an expectation of what their children are going to do, and they're either satisfied or not satisfied with the way things worked out.

Camp: Well, I'm convinced that what you're saying is more true now than it was in the case of my particular family in South Carolina. I'm not saying that there weren't families back there who had certain ideals or goals for their kids, but there were so many of us and we were out on this little patch of land, and certainly we couldn't all stay there. It was up to each one when he became of age or got married to strike

John Clayton Camp family. Wofford leaning on his father's knee.
Left to right: Saul, William, Mother (Mrs. J.C. Camp), Claude,
Margaret, Myrtle, Father (J.C. Camp), Wofford Benjamin and Hattie.

W.B. Camp's birthplace as he had it restored and remodeled in 1953.
Built 1804.

Mr. and Mrs. J.C. Camp in front of their home Camp's Cross Roads,
Cherokee County, Gaffney, South Carolina, where three generations of
Camps were reared.

Maud hitched to buggy, one year older than Wofford, was used in fields
until 30 years old. Often Maud was hitched to a wagon with Old Black
Joe (the bull) to haul crops from field.

The well shown in corner of year was a regular stopping place for all
wagons and buggies to water the animals and also quench man's thirst.

One Sunday afternoon, after church, when Maud finished drinking water
as shown in picture, she pulled away from the water trough, but not
quite wide enough, and the buggy wheel ran up over the concrete step
and lunged Wofford out of the buggy just as he stepped in off the
concrete wall (top was down), throwing him to the ground and breaking
a collar bone. Fortunately doctors were able to repair damage next
morning and no permanent damage occurred.

There was no modern plumbing in any country homes in the county at that
time, 1910. Also no electric lights, and of course no central heating.

Wofford built a bathroom in this home for his parents several years
after graduating from Clemson University in 1916.



Camp: out on his own. Because Mother and Dad couldn't help them get started much. The girls, yes; the girls, when they got married, Mother and Dad furnished a bedroom for each of them, complete, and gave them a cow. That was all. When my two oldest brothers got married, they were still back there at home, they were given a mule and a complete set of working tools, plow and a wagon, buggy, to get them started and have something to farm with. Now, had they gone in town they wouldn't have been given that same mule and horse and buggy, but they were going to farm.

Baum: That sounds like your folks were able to give quite a bit.

Camp: That wasn't much. That was more or less customary in my part of the country. When I got married I was out in California, and I missed out on that. Talk about hardships, my folks didn't consider it a hardship, but I think I said already they didn't have a bathroom in the house. I built that for them quite a number of years after I finished Clemson.

Education at Clemson College--An Agricultural Major

Baum: How come you went to Clemson?

Camp: Well, I wanted to stay in agriculture, and what little I'd been able to read in the farm magazines and papers, scientific agriculture seemed to be making progress and people were getting good jobs in agriculture; at least I thought they were good jobs. They weren't out plowing with a bull, anyway. I thought it would be the place for me to go. One of the determining reasons, however, was that the state offered a scholarship, several scholarships, and even though I hadn't been to high school I decided to take the examination. I took it and won--along with several others. There were about six or eight they were giving, I think, but I was one of the successful and that determined it by itself.

Baum: The brother you had most admired had gone to Clemson.

Camp: That's right. And that had something to do with it.

Baum: I'm sure your family must have been honored for you to win this scholarship.

Camp: They were very pleased. They were very pleased for me to have an opportunity to go to school because they couldn't help me.

Then when I got there of course I had to work--the scholarship was only two hundred dollars per year. I had to work at fifteen cents per hour to get any money I needed for books and clothes otherwise. It covered the tuition and board, and that's all. It was an agricultural school but it was under the military and we all had uniforms. It was a land grant college but it was just as strict as a full military, almost the same as West Point, at that time. It isn't now.

Baum: That wasn't usual for the land grant colleges.

Camp: Not all of them, it was for a few. But this was the one, this one and Citadel, down in Charleston, still is, and it today is a strict military school--General Mark Clark is the head of it--but Clemson was almost the same thing as Citadel and Virginia Polytechnic Institute in Virginia. I liked it, for many reasons. I liked the discipline, I liked particularly that everybody had to wear the same uniform, and that meant that, if I could buy my first uniform, I was all right and looked just as good as the others even though I couldn't send them to the cleaners to be cleaned and pressed. I could clean them and I made a board to press my trousers and I always had a crease in them. But we all had the same uniform.

Baum: Is Clemson mainly agricultural?

Camp: No. It's the same--the University of California is a land grant college, you know.

Baum: It's a land grant college, but it's also the university of the State of California, and I think many states established a university separate from their land grant colleges.

Camp: That's right. They did in South Carolina.

Baum: And those states have usually maintained their land grant colleges as agricultural and engineering. I believe that's the way the Land Grant Act provided.

Camp: Well, Clemson has everything at Clemson, all of the courses,

Camp: except law and medicine, and you can get pre-med there. But electrical, in that field, and chemistry and textiles and all--.

Baum: How about social sciences--philosophy and letters and science?

Camp: They've just now, this year, decided to have just a basic course in social sciences, and have the advanced work in that at the University of South Carolina. But my roommate at Clemson--Harry F. Brown--you say is it all agriculture--took chemistry and he went on immediately and went to work for DuPont and became the head chemist for DuPont Company, Delaware, and for many years--he retired last year--was in charge of all of their explosive work, which was their biggest department, and he got all of his basic work at Clemson, took no graduate work at all. So it is recognized as an excellent school and for the past many many years has had a standing invitation for every graduate that they can put out from there in electricity from General Electric, DuPont, and Western Electric. And it's got the best textile engineering school in the country. Also they have one of the best ceramic schools there now.

Baum: How many students were there when you went?

Camp: A little less than a thousand; about 120 graduated in my class, in June, 1916.

Baum: How did you earn your living at Clemson?

Camp: Any kind of work that I could get, and the pay was fifteen cents an hour, in the college offices or dean of the college or registrar's office, out on the farm pruning trees--anything I could get to do. The football coach, who knew my brother, who had been ahead of me, quite well, got awfully mad with me because I wouldn't play football. I didn't have time, I just had to work to go through school. Fifteen cents an hour wasn't much, but it helped me get by.

Baum: Where did you live?

Camp: In the barracks. One job I had at Clemson--this didn't happen, though, until I was a senior--the public schools of the city of St. Louis wrote to the president of the college and asked if they would have somebody prepare a cotton exhibit for them--they wanted to use it in the schools; so he passed it on down to the dean of the college of agriculture and he called me in

Camp: and asked me if I wanted to tackle it. So I did, and I worked awfully hard. I hired a horse and buggy and went several miles away to get some oil from an oil mill and some hulls and some meal and different things and I fixed up a complete exhibit of cotton, from the planting of the seed, and I made a story right from then right on through to all of the different processes, through the gins and the oil mills and the cotton textile mills, cloth and so on. I had quite an exhibit, and I crated it all up and shipped it to them, and didn't know what to charge them. I debated and debated and got all the opinions I could from some of my friends, so I got up courage enough to send them a bill for \$25. I had been over a month preparing it--in my spare time, of course, and I could have sent them a bill--! They wrote back to the president of the college, telling him that it was the finest exhibit that they had ever seen and it was exactly what they wanted, and made me know that I could have charged them several hundred dollars for it.

Baum: And you needed that money.

Camp: I needed it very badly, but I took my actual expenses, hiring the horse and buggy, buying of the little bit of material that I had to get, and then added fifteen cents an hour for my labor. [Laughing]

Baum: Nothing for your thought.

Camp: Nothing for my thought, no. But anyhow, if it contributed something to the kids, why, I guess I was repaid.

Baum: Did you go four years to Clemson?

Camp: Went four years, yes. Pretty tough the first year, because I hadn't had any high school. It was quite a struggle, but shortly after I got there, I had never had any geometry, but I recognized a couple of the geometry problems as two that had been on the examination, and lo and behold for some reason or other I had worked them correctly. I don't know how nor why but they must have been so simple they were just common sense. I guess that helped me get into school.

Baum: What was your major?

Camp: Agronomy. Horticulture my minor. But we had a very fine course in all phases of agriculture as it then existed in South Carolina, all of the crops, vegetables, horticulture, all of the fruits, pruning, grafting, planting and harvesting, all of the different--animals, we had a very full dairy

Camp: course, a fine course in animal husbandry, poultry, farm machinery, and of course very few tractors were being used at that time but all of the other machinery we had. Then we had a fundamental course, a very fine course, in all of the usual subjects taught at other colleges--English, literature, mathematics, had a course in textile work also. As I look back I wonder now how we got all of those courses in. I don't think they allow a student to take so many courses now. I'm not sure.

Baum: Knowing what you know now about agriculture, was the material you learned then factual or was it a lot of false information that was considered true at that time?

Camp: Most of it factual. As you and I know, there's nothing so constant as change, and that certainly applies to agriculture even more than it does to many other parts of our economy. Many of the things we do today are built on things that have been discovered since I was in school. But cotton breeding, I learned my first about cotton breeding there and I went right from the college into the old rice fields; my work out here was with cotton, and for quite a number of years I was the only cotton breeder in California. I was depended on to do it all, but I got it all right there at Clemson and it's still a pretty good course in training that I got there.

Baum: Did you have any courses that taught you experimental techniques?

Camp: Yes, we had to do a lot of work experimentally out on the experiment station. We had to plant different plots, they were treated different ways, and so on, but most of all, as I look back, my mother and dad taught me to see what I looked at. We had to; we had to make a living, we actually lived off our farm, and when I got into Clemson, why, in studying the science of agriculture, I naturally would relate it back to my previous experiences, and it helped. And I think today that's one of the things that's most lacking in a lot of our young men, and women too, but in young men who study some of these courses in agriculture. They don't actually see what they look at.

Well, when I came out here to California I realized that I was up against it, that the whole potential cotton industry, whether it was successful or failed, was dependent upon my knowledge. Then I had to make sure that I looked at the thing correctly myself, and gave the correct advice.

Baum: Are there any professors you recall particularly?

Camp: Well, yes, I recall quite a lot of them. They were great men; they were working for very small salaries, as most college professors were then, but they were dedicated, completely dedicated to teaching, to imparting information to others. My history professor was very very wonderful, and Professor Joe-Joe Morrison, I couldn't possibly forget him because he was factual about everything and made you learn the subject. I remember an examination, he asked, "Write all you can about Louis the Fourteenth, and I couldn't remember a whole lot but I remembered one thing and I wrote it down, and that's all I said: "The reign of Louis the Fourteenth in my opinion can be summed up by 'I am the state', " and he gave me a hundred on that examination. Maybe that helped me get through Clemson, I don't know, but anyway he impressed that on me as we went through the courses, certain things, and some things stood out.

I've forgotten his initials, but that's what they called him: Joe-Joe. His was one of the required courses, but he was a very fine friend, made a lasting impression on me. So did the mathematics professor, Joe Hunter. My English professor, Baldhead, (A. B. Bryan) was very good, and his son, by the way, in passing, graduated there, and he was with our armies in the crossing of the Channel in World War II. He was in a plane flying around when we were making our first landing over there in France and flew back to England, and is the man, Wright Bryan, who reported to the world that the allied armies had landed. Wright Bryan is now editor and publisher of the Cleveland Plain Dealer newspaper in Ohio. (Wright Bryan in the early sixties became vice president of Clemson University.) He and I some three years ago, 1960, were for some reason selected to receive the two first honors given by Clemson College for graduates. I don't know what category that came in. Out of all the graduates, they selected somebody to honor. They've had two of them since then.

Baum: Do you remember any of the boys that you palled around with?

Camp: Oh yes. There were thirteen of us in the same class, all the classes together, for the whole four years. One of them later became president of the college, Dr. Poole. He died a couple or three years ago. Another one in that group is Jim Eleazer, who flunked English under the same Professor Bryan, but went on to become a county agent and a writer, radio man, and was recognized three years straight as the best agricultural college writer in America.

Baum: Does he write the information bulletins?

Camp: He did. He's retired now.

Baum: What I was reading of his was not information-bulletin type but it was very good writing.

Camp: He was a free-lance writer. He was information specialist, and he just wrote on anything he wanted to. But he would pick up some of that, of course, and peddle it. He wrote on anything he wanted to, but he'd give his own experiences and then he'd bring in some scientific stuff and get it in there. That's what you call a good writer, if you can do it that way.

Another one of them has been a farmer in South Carolina, Hugh Agnew. Been president of the South Carolina Farm Bureau for twelve or fifteen years. Incidentally, his daughter went through college with a young lady who later became the wife of the governor of South Carolina, the now Senator Strom Thurmond. But while this girl was in college Strom Thurmond's wife-to-be introduced my son to this girl and he married her. Even though her father was my classmate, I had nothing to do with this match.

Baum: Just shows it's a small world.

Camp: Yes. Most of the boys who graduated with me at Clemson went on into the agricultural world--I mean those who graduated in agricultural courses. As I say, my roommate became a head official of the Dupont Company, in charge of all their explosives. Another one became one of the top men of General Electric, in the electrical field: Sam Littlejohn. He's vice president of General Electric.

Baum: Sounds like Clemson must have been a good college.

Camp: Well, a small college, it was, and it had a type of atmosphere there--most of the boys were poor, from poor country families, and were there to do a job, weren't there playing. And I think that was the secret of the whole thing. And being a military place, if they tried to play too much or did anything naughty--smoking and drinking, even among the boys, was disallowed. If you were caught smoking anywhere, ever, while you were in college you were kicked out. I think they've changed that today. But I'm glad they had it that way then. A lot of boys were shipped for smoking.

Baum: Clemson is a boys' college?

Camp: It was. Five or six years ago the trustees allowed some girls to go, and now as time goes on there'll be more and more girls.

We organized a club, this thirteen who went to all the classes together, and we called it the Humdinger Club. All of us had an office, and I was the Chief Forager, which meant if we had any picnics or barbecues or what-have-you I had to get out and rustle the food. Don't ask me how I got it or where, because I didn't have any money, but we had to get the food. Mostly from the college experiment patches, however, fruit trees and potato patches and so on.

Baum: That must have hampered the experimental work. Well, how about starting next time with your first job on the rice plantation?

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AGENT IN THE SAN

JOAQUIN VALLEY, CALIFORNIA, 1917-1922
(Second Interview, July 14, 1962)

First Job--Combahee Plantation, South Carolina

Baum: What was the year you graduated from Clemson?

Camp: 1916. June, 1916.

Baum: You mentioned that you were interested in a job with a financial institution but you didn't say it on the tape.

Camp: National Retail Credit Corporation, headquarters in Atlanta, had written to the president of the college asking him for the names of several individuals and something about them, so they could decide. They wanted to employ one man; so they sent down a number of names. We didn't know anything about it, but later on I was asked to come over to the president's office. He told me that a group in Atlanta had asked if I wanted to come down and interview them, they'd send me a ticket and put me up in a hotel for a week and have a week's interview. So I went down the day I graduated, stayed there a week, visited with them every day, and after a week I think they decided that I hadn't traveled enough--as a matter of fact I'd never traveled any, that was the farthest I'd ever been away--and that I might not enjoy the job, since it had no agriculture in it, and I agreed with them that I wanted agriculture, or at least something related to it, and that had none. I presume you might say they turned me down and I turned the other direction and went home. Happy. Not disappointed at all.

Baum: What were you planning to do about job hunting?

Camp: Well, I was available for a job somewhere in an agricultural connection, of course, the college itself put out feelers

Camp: all around and, the same as that potential job down in Atlanta, inquiries came in and the college kept writing to me for the first few weeks asking me if I would be interested in thus and so, and finally an offer came through from a little college down in Georgia. They wrote me several times and finally we agreed that I would go down in charge of the chair of science. Also I would be athletic coach and have charge, part of my duties would be to lead in Christian education, too--at Clemson I had been superintendent of Sunday school for the group in the college chapel, interdenominational group, even though I was a Baptist. But we all had to go to church. We did not have to go to Sunday school, but most of us did. So I accepted that job and they wrote up a college bulletin and had me listed in there as the dean of the chair of science--I'm not sure whether it said dean, in charge of the chair of science or something.

Subsequently, a week or two later, Washington, the Department of Agriculture sent me a telegram asking me if I would accept a position with them in the lower part of the state on a plantation in the old rice fields. One of the DuPonts had bought it from Mr. Heyward, ex-governor of South Carolina. The Department of Agriculture was down there experimenting. They were desperately trying out different crops and wanted to try out many more, to see if the old rice fields could be reclaimed for some other crops. Rice had disappeared from South Carolina--again, as I said, there's nothing so constant as change. All of the rice there had been entirely hand planted, hand harvested and everything, in the smaller patches, so Louisiana and Texas had started planting rice and did it on a larger scale, mechanized, and completely took the rice-growing industry away from South Carolina. California had also started growing rice.

So I went down, and my job was to supervise the planting and growing and harvesting of all these many different crops. The Department of Agriculture had assigned specialists from different branches, vegetables, horticulture, agronomy, and all across the board, but my job down there was to supervise the whole thing for those people and work with them.

Baum: That was a big job, it sounds like, for a young man just out of college, untried.

Camp: Yes, untried except since the day I was born, I guess. Out in the cottonpatch I had to work at those kinds of jobs.

Baum: Was this sort of an experimental farm?

Camp: That's exactly what you would call it, an experimental station, and yet it was on private land. It belonged to the DuPonts at the time. DuPont had appealed to Clemson College to help them determine what they could grow. Also he appealed to Washington, D.C., the Department of Agriculture. So the Department and Clemson were co-operating with private industry, DuPont and ex-Governor Heyward, in trying to determine what crops, if any, could be grown down there.

Baum: Was this a large acreage?

Camp: A very large acreage, Combahee Plantation, many thousands of acres, but our experiments and commercial crops comprised only two or three hundred acres total. It was back from the sea-coast a little ways, but still the ocean water came up some of the rivers and pushed back into the inland some. A lot of duck hunting in that country.

Baum: What did you try to grow there?

Camp: Oh, many many different crops. The specialists out of Washington, the vegetable people, came down and just planted many various crops. The forage people planted all kinds of alfalfa, vetches, many new crops that had come in from foreign countries, including soy beans from Manchuria. Dr. Morse of the U.S.D.A. was the one who brought this crop to America. I helped him plant the first ones on this project.

The agronomy division brought down several types of corn and milo, and cotton, of course, was one of the main crops tried by them. We planted several different varieties of cotton. Sea Island cotton had been grown along the seacoast of South Carolina and Georgia, but the boll weevil had just arrived in South Carolina the year before and that meant the complete death of Sea Island cotton along there, because it took a long season to grow it and the boll weevils were in their heaven down on the seacoast.

Baum: Was there any consideration of growing rice there under different production methods?

Camp: They had tried rice differently but they had no way of planting it in large acreages and mechanizing as they were doing in Louisiana and Texas and California so they just gave it up as a bad job. Also they had had a big storm a year or two before that had torn out some of the levees that had kept the sea water from coming up, and with all of this competition in Texas and Louisiana they realized that it wasn't worth it to go to the expense of trying to build that back. Their industry was gone anyway.

Baum: You were working on cotton, is that right?

Camp: I was working on all of those things there, and during the time I was there along came the head of the cotton breeding office in Washington--he was there many times--Dr. O. F. Cook, and he, after a few visits, persuaded me that I ought to devote all of my time to cotton instead of these others. He made it so attractive that I finally agreed to go to the cotton breeding office, and even though I had accepted this job in a Georgia college, he said that the department would write to the school down there and explain the situation in such a way that I would not be blamed too much. I wrote to the college myself, of course, and explained it and apologized and so on, and I just hope they didn't blame me too much.

Baum: It sounded as though if you'd stayed at Combahee Plantation you would have tended more toward administration of a large...

Camp: It's hard to know just really what would have been the situation had I stayed. Mr. DuPont himself tried awfully hard to persuade me to stay, and not go. It was in the wind then they wanted me in the cotton breeding office because they wanted me to go west, and he tried to persuade me to stay on. We were getting along all right. Ex-Governor Heyward tried awfully hard to get me to stay, but the lure of it was too much.

Baum: The lure of what, the west or the cotton?

Camp: The lure of the challenge to go west and to pioneer in a field that was new in the west, and also any youngster just out of school who had heard so much about California, who had a chance to go, he probably would take it. But everything put together, and having been born and raised in a cotton patch, that was my first love, and it was my first love in college as well as on the farm, it just seemed like the thing for me to do. And I'm very happy I did it.

Assignment to Develop Long Staple Cotton in California

Baum: Was Dr. Cook to be your superior?

Camp: Yes, he was for the next few years.

Baum: Did you have to go to Washington?

Camp: Yes. I went about Christmastime; I left there and went to Washington and was put through some interviews there with different people, then rated to go west. I'd never been west. I'd never talked to anybody who'd been out here, so it was all a brand new country to me.

Baum: Did they try to give you any special training on western problems?

Camp: Oh, they talked to me some, but this was a new venture and there wasn't much that they could tell me except to go out and use my own judgment. At first the plan was to have some older man come with me and he would be the general manager, contact man, and I would be the technical cotton man. I don't know what went wrong, but anyway they never secured that man. I've forgotten his name; they had him all selected. But when it came to a showdown I had to come alone, so I came out in early March of 1917.

Baum: Was this part of the war effort?

Camp: Yes. I'm glad you mentioned that. The airplanes we were flying then had to have a strong cloth for the wings, which were made of balsa wood, and that was covered with strong fabric. You could only make a strong fabric out of long staple cotton. The Sea Island cotton that was grown along the coast of South Carolina and Georgia was the strongest cotton we had; in fact this was the longest and strongest cotton fiber grown anywhere in the world. We also imported some Egyptian cotton, but Germany was at war and their submarines were sinking the boats so we couldn't get any Egyptian cotton over here, so the Army and the Department of Agriculture all put their heads together to seek a solution. They were frantic to determine if we could in the United States grow a long staple cotton in sufficient quantity to supply this potential need. We weren't at war yet but it looked like we were going to be. And that was the excuse for this.

Expected Problems

Camp: Just the day before I left Washington they went into a huddle, the chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry and the heads of the different offices in the Agriculture Department. Of course it was much smaller then than it is now. You could get the heads of the whole Department of Agriculture together in one room almost. So they got together and called me in the day before I left to give final instructions, and as the final word Mr. C. S. Scofield, who, I believe, was in charge of western agriculture, and included in that was dry land agriculture and irrigated agriculture--he had been for years all over the west and spent a lot of time out there--he spoke up and said, "Now, Dr. Taylor," (who was chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry, W. A. Taylor) "you folks are making a great mistake to send this young man out to California and other western states."

He was asked why, and he said, "There are two reasons why you're making a mistake. First, cotton won't grow out there in the San Joaquin Valley and those other valleys up and down there. You're asking him to see if it will; it won't. We've tried it. And second..." Mr. Scofield, I might say, had under his supervision several experiment stations. One was located down near Yuma, Arizona, and one over in Fallon, Nevada, and I don't know where some others were, but anyhow he had supervised experiments; he had men there doing it, so his judgment was based on some of his experiences.

But he said, "The second reason why you're making a big mistake is you're making as one of the requirements that Camp co-operate with the University of California, and he can't do it, for the same reason that no one else has ever been able to do it. You just shouldn't ask him to do that, and if that's one of the requirements you just shouldn't ask him to go."

Well, I was sitting there just listening, and these were certainly two big hurdles and yet, as I thought of it, they were two great challenges to me. As I found later, both proved to be somewhat wrong. In fact completely wrong.

Baum: Why did he think you couldn't co-operate with the University of California?

Camp: I really can't answer that. I have my own ideas, but I'm

Camp: not sure that I'm right. But just as today Mrs. Camp and I have found in visiting European countries many Americans swagger as they go from place to place and they think they're Mr. It, and we can easily understand why a lot of people in some of those countries don't like a lot of Americans. So it was--at least I thought--in California. Many of the government people at that time, and still, swagger when they go out of the Washington office and go into a state or somewhere. They for some reason or other, I don't know, feel like they're Mr. Somebody, and people should stand up or sit up and take notice. I sensed that after I got to California. I soon found out why some of the people from Washington weren't liked, and I suspect that was the basis of his statement.

Baum: You didn't have a center to go to, did you? What were you supposed to do?

Camp: Well, that was somewhat mysterious too, as I found out after I got out here, but as I say they originally had intended to send an older man with me to do that phase of it, to be kind of the general manager or the public relations man and tell me as a youngster what not to do or what to do, I guess. But since I was alone I had to do it my own way, and I was kept awfully busy all the time so I didn't have much time to think about whether I was doing public relations right or wrong.

But anyway, I stopped off near Yuma, Arizona, and went to the experiment station that Mr. Schofield was the boss of. I stayed there a few days and studied some maps and then jumped a train and came on up to the San Joaquin Valley.

Getting Started in the San Joaquin Valley--A Spirit of Co-operation

Camp: San Joaquin was the valley that, if it would grow cotton, had lots of acres of fine land, according to all reports. So I came to Bakersfield, and after I arrived I immediately asked some questions around, went to the county agent, the agricultural commissioner's office, and others.

Kern County Land Company

- Camp: Then I found the Kern County Land Company headquarters in Bakersfield and they had lots and lots of land, so I thought that would be a place to go. I met the general manager, Mr. H. A. Jastro, an elderly man, a very kindly fellow, and told him the story and he was very much interested, very co-operative. He called in several of his top men, told them what I had told him, and then instructed them to co-operate with me in any manner that I wanted. If I wanted some acreage of land for cotton experiments, for them to see that I got it, anywhere I wanted it, and for them to see that I got the labor to help me do it.
- Baum: So he was going to underwrite a lot of your expenses, provide you with equipment and labor?
- Camp: We weren't asking for donations, but I asked for facilities and they provided the land and they made available the labor, but I saw to it that I wrote a check to pay for the labor, with Department of Agriculture money, because we weren't wanting him to think that we were mooching in any way. But they would have given anything, and did, that year.

We selected an area of land just on the edge of town. Today buildings are all over it, nice homes, but it was right near one of their headquarters and even though it was very foul with Johnson grass and all other kinds of weeds, which I hadn't had experience with, the land looked good and there was some water available for irrigation so I accepted it and in time prepared the land and planted it; even though I had to do a lot of cleaning of weeds myself along with the other labor that I could get, I stayed with them and saw that it was done right. We actually made a very fine crop of cotton. Planted many (thirty-two, I believe) different varieties there the first year, to try out. Also I selected patches up and down the valley and up in the Sacramento Valley and other valleys, in Nevada and all around, to try out cotton and see if it would grow.

- Baum: Was this all Kern County Land Company land? They had land in other counties, didn't they?
- Camp: No, not in California. All in Kern County. They owned land in Arizona and New Mexico and own some yet in Oregon,

Camp: I guess, but that's all cattle land.

After I had made all my arrangements in Bakersfield with Mr. Jastro and others and the agricultural commission people, they all became tremendously interested. The county agent was only mildly interested in co-operating, at the beginning, so I depended on the agricultural commissioners that first year completely. But during the year the others became very co-operative.

College of Agriculture, University of California

Camp: I made my arrangements with Mr. Jastro, but before I planted the cotton I came on up immediately to Berkeley, and I met the folks at the College of Agriculture and Dean--I think Dean Hunt was the Dean of Agriculture at that time. Dr. Wickson had just retired some while before as Dean of the College of Agriculture, and I believe he was then acting as editor of the Pacific Rural Press, the farm paper. Had his office right in the agriculture building here at the University of California. I went in and was visiting with him--he had written all of these textbooks and I'd been given some of them to read, about all types of agriculture all over California, and in the course of the conversation with Dr. Wickson he said, "Camp, cotton won't grow down in the San Joaquin Valley," and I said, "Well, I don't know. My job is to plant a lot of patches in different places and see what it will do, and a year from now I can tell you more."

"Well," he said, "if it did grow you couldn't get it harvested, because nobody picks cotton but Negroes."

That was the biggest shock that I'd had since I left Washington. I squirmed around and finally got up courage enough to tell him, "Dr. Wickson, I don't know what it is in other states and areas, but in my part of South Carolina everybody picks cotton, and I made a living picking cotton until I left there some months ago. My brothers and sisters and my mother and dad are still picking cotton when fall comes around."

I said, "Everybody, all the white folks, are right out

Camp: in the field with the Negroes, neighbors and others; we all pick cotton. We didn't know there was any place where the white folks didn't do it." But again that's because I had never been--I guess it was true in some places, but I had never traveled to those and I just didn't know about them.

But all in all I must say that Dr. Wickson was one of the most co-operative men that I could have met at all, and we became good friends as long as he lived. And also Dean Hunt, the Dean of the College of Agriculture, an older man, and he too became a good friend of mine and called in some of his staff people and told them that he would appreciate it if they would co-operate with me.

So I never found any real hostility anywhere at all, except perhaps--and not hostility then--in the director of Agricultural Extension, Mr. B. H. Crocheron. He and I became very good friends, officially, and personally, but he never wanted cotton in California, and he so stated. He told the other people in the University, and others all over the state wherever he went, that they did not want to get cotton, that it would ruin the state of California both economically and socially.

Baum: I know there's always been a lot of sociological opposition to cotton.

Camp: He opposed it in many, many, many speeches he and I made on the same platform; he was saying, "Don't plant cotton, it will ruin the state." I would say immediately that I was not advocating cotton, it was just a matter that I'd been asked to come to explain how to grow cotton, how to plant it and so on, and that's all I was doing, that I was not going to discuss the other phase of it.

In talking to Dr. Wickson that first trip, when I was sitting there squirming, wondering what to say to him when he said nobody would pick cotton but Negroes, I said, "Well, Dr. Wickson, I guess that's so, but I made a living at it, and as a matter of fact I was the champion cotton picker in my part of South Carolina, and I enjoyed it."

I can say frankly that cotton picking is one of the things that I enjoyed most when I was a young man. It just fascinated me and it was not terribly hard work--yes, it was hard work. Many a night I slept with a pillow under my back from stooping over picking cotton; the cotton plants

- Camp: in our area were short then, quite different from what it is in California. Cotton plants were short and we carried a sack around our neck, around our shoulder, instead of dragging it as some of them do now where they pick by hand yet. We got tired, very tired, but it was a good old tired, and we slept well.
- Baum: Weren't Mr. Crocheron and his Extension workers the people you had to come in contact with the most?
- Camp: Yes. The first year it was rather difficult, they were very cool, I presume because all of the county agents knew that he himself did not want cotton, and they were friendly with me and would visit with me but they didn't go out and help me with any experiments at all, whereas the agricultural commissioners--there's an agricultural commissioner in each county working directly under the Director of Agriculture from Sacramento, so I have to give a lot of credit to them for the first year or two of work. They were most co-operative. But then after the second year, when cotton was being grown commercially, the county agents had to get into the picture as a part of their work, and they were anxious to have me come into each county where they had some and demonstrate chopping cotton, turning it, and all the other activities which I did personally, and we became very, very fine friends. The county agents and their wives became the closest friends I had, and whenever they would go on a valley-wide picnic or an overnight trip to the mountains, I was considered a part of their group and always invited to go. Instead of finding that I couldn't co-operate, that the University wouldn't co-operate with me, I found that, well, it just couldn't have been finer. Couldn't have been. The only thing then, as I say, was Crocheron himself just didn't want cotton, but he did co-operate with me in every way that I wanted.

W. T. Nutting

- Baum: I saw Mr. W. T. Nutting's name listed as someone who helped you with the land.
- Camp: I'd almost forgotten that. The first year in California I didn't have an automobile, and I was just riding the trains everywhere, just as fast as I could go, and busses, and it was quite inconvenient, but Mr. Nutting, whom I didn't know, but he himself heard about the cotton experiments that I was conducting and we got acquainted through the agricultural commissioner's office, Mr. Fred Roullard, in Fresno, helped me out. Mr. Nutting had been responsible for and is still recognized, I believe, in official California agriculture

Camp: as the man most responsible for Thompson seedless grapes in California. He was a very enthusiastic man, quite old at that time, I thought, but he'd get in that little old Model T Ford and he could out-drive anybody I ever saw. He'd scare me to death. But anyway he saw that I was afoot and couldn't go as fast from one patch to another as I needed to to actually look after them, and then he asked me why I didn't have an automobile. I said I didn't have any money to buy one and the department hadn't seen fit to supply one; I hadn't asked them for one. He said, "All right, I'll supply you one," so he bought an old Model T Ford and furnished it to me, and he said, "You can buy it from me at the end of the year," which I did, for a song.

So he was very co-operative, and I'd say even though he was a raisin man, a grape man, he played quite a hand in that first two or three years because his idea was, and he said, "California badly needs another crop to have labor that will be used--we've got to have labor in the grapes, but there's nothing for them to do when the grape work is over. It looks like cotton should be an ideal supplementary crop from the labor standpoint." And he was right. So that was his interest.

Baum: Was he a good businessman?

Camp: I didn't know much about his operations. He had--maybe still has--a son who was in the raisin processing and buying and selling business, had a good business as far as I know. But Mr. Nutting himself was more of a dreamer, as I understood. I heard people call him a crackpot, but he was a very profitable crackpot from the standpoint of California agriculture; from his own pocketbook standpoint perhaps he wasn't a good businessman because he wasn't looking at that end of it. He was from my standpoint a very fine man. As proof of that, I believe the Thompson seedless raisin association subsequently voted, and paid him so much a pound for all of the Thompson seedless raisins grown one year, as a bonus or reward for his having brought in the Thompson seedless grape.

Fred Roullard

Camp: Mr. Fred Roullard, the agricultural commissioner in Fresno, was one of the most helpful men in the state of California

Camp: the first several years that I was experimenting in cotton. In Fresno when I couldn't get any land that first year, I got some out on the Kearney Experiment Station, which was owned by the University, but I wanted additional patches and it was difficult to get because that was the raisin country. Mr. Roullard had some land out near Clovis and he said, "You can have anything I've got, and my father has."

So I went out there, and did a lot of labor, hard labor--never worked harder in my life, I don't think, as I did on some of that, trying to make the cotton grow, and did. Had a very nice showing. What we were trying to do was to prove in lots of places whether it would or wouldn't grow, because if I only had one patch and it did all right I couldn't say that that would be universal, but I had a lot of patches every year for the first two or three years.

Cotton Experiments--Acala Variety Chosen

Baum: What kind of cotton did you try out? What variety?

Camp: To start with, the government's idea was to see if we could grow the Egyptian-type cotton, which was an inch and a half long staple, very much like the Sea Island cotton, and that's what was needed. So that was the one we were shooting at but along with it we tried out Acala; I brought Acala seed because I had some of the Acala growing in South Carolina in the rice fields and it looked so pretty there I insisted that I ought to try it out west. I didn't know whether it would grow or not but it looked like it was very fine cotton, so I brought that. And I had Durango cotton, which was a long staple upland cotton, and Lone Star, which was a short staple from Texas, and I had half-and-half and I had many of the Southern varieties--many varieties. I think, as I recall, that I planted thirty to thirty-two varieties each year for several years, several rows of each, to test them out properly. Acala did so well along with Egyptian--Egyptian did quite well, and I was very lucky that first year. It matured nicely and there was an open fall, no fog and no rain, and I harvested a nice crop, so I went ahead and wrote a bulletin as the government wanted me to do, advocating the growing of only Pima Egyptian cotton.

Baum: That was 1919?

Camp: Yes. The fall seasons had been good, both in '17 and '18, and we harvested good crops and they were very profitable crops, because the price was quite good. But even so these other cottons that I had, and particularly Acala and Lone Star--Acala looked the best to me but Lone Star looked awfully good, it was a very big boll, so I got enough seed of that to plant a five-acre patch the second year. I got me a piece of isolated land from another man out near Arwin, Mr. Charley Maddox, and I planted that Acala cotton out there and, oh, it did wonderfully well. I planted the Lone Star on a field with Mr. Fred Hall, who had been--oh, he'd been a candidate for Governor of California, lived in Bakersfield and had a bank there--and that did awfully well, but it was shorter cotton than Acala, and Acala to me was the best all the way around, except Egyptian was doing awfully well, and that's what we needed. And in order to get them to grow nothing but Egyptian commercially, we got the county of Kern and the county of Tulare and the county of--I think Kings County and I think Fresno County--we got the supervisors in those counties to pass a county ordinance forbidding the planting of anything but the Egyptian cotton. They were co-operating from a patriotic standpoint, because the government needed, they thought, long staple cotton for the airplane wings and ambulance tires and I found the people most co-operative everywhere, and also it was at that time a profitable crop for the farmers.

Baum: This was still during the war?

Camp: World War I, yes. Then when the war was over they still were growing Pima cotton, and in 1919 grew a very fine crop of Pima cotton; we got a few thousand acres of it growing. I had over one hundred acres of it with the University up here at Fresno. And I planted a big acreage with the Kern County Land Company in Bakersfield, and when that was harvested I sold that crop for the University for \$1.05 1/4 a pound. I sold it in January of 1920. A few days later I sold the Kern County Land Company crop for \$1.05 a pound, just a quarter of a cent less. A lot of people hadn't sold their cotton, didn't sell it; they thought it was going to sell higher maybe, but pretty soon the price of Egyptian cotton began to slip, and finally during the summer it just went down to almost nothing. It was a sad state of affairs, the Egyptian cotton market just went to pot that quickly.

Fortunately for the California cotton industry, we had by

Camp: that time proven that Acala cotton was really awfully good for the San Joaquin Valley, and I had enough pure seed already planted, isolated, and ready to step right in and take over, and that's exactly what the growers did. It was a wonderful experience to see the smooth transition from a variety that all of them were growing, but the price went bad on it, into another cotton, another variety, where they saw they could make twice as much cotton per acre, took six weeks less time to mature--Egyptian cotton requires a long season, and if there's a bad fall, as there was in 1920, why, they didn't get to harvest it all until after Christmas. So we set about to advise, urge all growers up and down the state to plant Acala cotton, and they did.

There were one or two who wanted to plant one of these other varieties. There's one incident as I look back. I told you a while ago I planted some Lone Star cotton on a patch with Fred Hall, who had run for governor of the state of California, a great big fat fellow; he was Mr. It, he thought, but anyway he wanted to sell that seed. It was good seed, but it wasn't in my judgment as good as the Acala, and he wanted to sell it to the growers to have them plant Lone Star cotton instead of Acala. I was determined that he wouldn't do it. He had grown that cotton under my supervision, I had given him the seed to start with, and I was determined that he wouldn't do it. Well, he tried to make an issue of it and did, and finally he said, "I'm going to Washington to see that you get fired because of this activity," and I said, "All right"--I don't know why I said it, but I said, "when you get back from Washington I'll meet you with a brass band and we'll have a celebration." I had more nerve in those days than I had sense, but I thought I was right and he didn't press it any further; that was the end of that, and he didn't get to sell his Lone Star seed. That was the end of Lone Star in California.

But there were others. There was one bird out from Memphis, he had purchased a small processing plant in Fresno. This plant had been used in connection with the raisin industry. He wanted the growers to plant Mebane, a Texas cotton, so he went up and down the valley making speeches that I was all wrong, that they ought to plant this shorter cotton and they could get it harvested quicker and make more money and so on. Well, we took the speaking trail together, and I would show up at the meetings where he was, and it was a battle. He didn't win, because he wasn't right. Fortunately Mebane was one of the varieties we had been testing every year. We were able to argue from experience.

Camp: But those were two of the bitterest battles that I had. I had another battle later on, about 19--maybe '38, I'm not sure. Well, I'm getting ahead of my story.

Life of a USDA Agent

Baum: When you planted these patches, did you have an office?

Camp: In my hat.

Baum: You lived in hotels?

Camp: I lived in hotels, as I told you earlier. I was turned down for the job in Atlanta, right out of Clemson, because I had never traveled. However, for the first seven years when I came out here I lived in hotels and traveled all the time, fifty to sixty thousand miles every year.

Baum: And your office was just wherever you were?

Camp: Yes, wherever I was, until 1922. It is true that the agricultural commissioner's office and the county agent in Bakersfield, their offices for a while were in the same building, on the same floor, in the Bakersfield Courthouse, so at first the agricultural commissioner gave me a desk in his office to sit at when I was in that county, and I used his secretary. That worked out fine. Subsequently, when the county agents became very much interested in cotton, up and down, the county agent persuaded me to have an office with him because actually he was more active in the cotton growing and experimenting than the agricultural commissioner. Agricultural commissioners were going out of their way--it wasn't their job.

Baum: Commissioners are supposed to supervise regulations but not do any new work.

Camp: That's right, but those first few years they went overboard to help. But subsequently then I did have a desk in the county agent's office in Bakersfield and they were very very wonderful to me. That was up until 1922 when I started the experiment station.

Baum: Did you have adequate funds from Washington to carry on your work?

Camp: I guess so. We got along all right but we had little funds. Compared to today's expenditures for such activities you might say we had none, or nearly none, but we were supposed--or at least I didn't know we weren't supposed, to do a lot of the work ourselves, and I'm convinced that one of the reasons why most of our patches of cotton, those first years, were successful was because I supervised every one of them and did a lot of the work on every one of them myself, every week. I was on the go night and day all the time. It wasn't a matter of convenience, it was a matter of necessity, a duty that I had to do, and I was just there.

Baum: Do you recall what your salary was at that time?

Camp: Yes. One hundred dollars a month, to start with. It increased a little bit over the next few years. I was never concerned about the salary. That was a lot of money to me, I'd never had any before, so that was a lot of money, but never in my life then nor since did I ever ask to be paid more by anybody. I felt if I deserved it I'd get it in time.

Baum: Did you buy any property of your own so that you might become a farmer?

Camp: Not until after the experiment station was established in 1923. And that only as an investment. Even though my salary was only one hundred dollars a month to start with, from the time I ever made any money I saved a little bit of it each month.

Baum: You got married somewhere along in there, didn't you?

Camp: In December, 1921. I never had time to think of marriage the first years. Had no time to think of it at all, and while we always had enjoyed everything we did, and had fun, saw things in different places and went swimming, and when I'd drive to Los Angeles I'd go to the ocean, but I'd had a challenge in two places, first one in Washington and the second one Dr. Wickson, and I couldn't afford to let the cotton project fail because of any neglect on my own part.

Establishment of a Cotton Experiment Station

Camp: As time went on and we had these patches in many places all

Camp: over the state and over in Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico, it was running me to death but that wasn't the main consideration. I finally determined that in order to answer all of the questions accurately that were being asked, and rightly so, about what is the best time to plant the cotton, how deep shall we plant the cotton seed, how wide apart shall we space the plants, how much irrigation water, when to irrigate, and all those things--it was almost impossible for me to answer accurately without having complete control of some experiments. So I talked around among some of the agricultural commissioners and county agents and felt them out, to see what they thought about it, and they said, "Yes, we agree that you do need a central place, and why don't you get one?"

Well, I knew that the Department of Agriculture would not look with favor upon it because they had said that the University of California wouldn't co-operate, and I knew there would be a hassle there if I approached it from that end. So I visited around with the county agents and at their conventions, and in 1920 I went with them on part of their annual tour, and they had me give demonstrations of cotton chopping and different things that we had to do to the cotton, up and down the valley. I got better acquainted with Professor Crocheron than I had before, and I mentioned that some of his men had asked me why we didn't have a station. I put it on that basis.

Well, to make a long story short Professor Crocheron and the Dean of the College of Agriculture, Dr. Thomas F. Hunt, both wrote, and so did Dr. Frank Adams, to the Chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry, Department of Agriculture, suggesting that they ought to have a cotton experiment station out here so we could conduct these experiments in good shape. That of course was precisely what I wanted them to do. Then after I heard from Washington saying they had received these letters and asking what I thought about it, why I of course wholeheartedly agreed and then one thing led to another, they came out here and we visited the University people.

In the meantime I had also talked to the supervisors in Bakersfield and to the Kern County Land Company, Mr. Jastro again, and I had all of the arrangements made there to get ready for a favorable word from Washington. When they did react favorably I had land all ready to go. Mr. Jastro had told his men, "Give him anything he wants, any amount of land, any location, and we'll either give it to him (meaning, of course, as agent for the USDA) or we'll rent it to him for a long time, for a dollar a year or any way they want."

So he assigned his head land man (Mr. A. G. M. Osborne)

Camp: to me and we spent many days in his automobile with an auger out in the country; I was boring holes testing the soils and studying it from the standpoint of what piece of land we wanted for an experiment station. Finally we decided on one, forty acres at first and immediately afterwards forty acres more.

Baum: So Kern County Land Company gave you eighty acres, or leased it to you.

Camp: They leased it to us and we had the county lease it. I don't know why, maybe it sounds a bit ego, but it was my own thinking, but something told me that it would be better if we weren't doing it directly with a private farmer or private company, that this was for the benefit of all growers and maybe we'd get them to lease it or sell it to the county, which they agreed to do. They sold it to the county of Kern for a nominal sum, and so it is today. The county owns it and leases it to the government for a nominal dollar a year or whatever it is, and it's a fine working arrangement. The Kern County Land Company was the one that actually gave us our sendoff. Then the county, I got them to appropriate a sum of money to put up some buildings; the county paid for the house I lived in, assigned their own architect to it, and then the government put in some money to build some bunkhouses for some helpers and visiting co-operators.

Baum: I believe the Chamber of Commerce raised some money to buy you some land also; there was a lot of haggling about whether it should be three acres or twenty acres--.

Camp: That was in connection with this same thing. Then subsequently we bought another forty-sixty acres, so they own now more than eighty. It's a hundred and something. Yes, there was a little, but the finagling and haggling never did amount to anything--merely personalities showing up.

Baum: You were set up and ready to go about the beginning of 1922?

Camp: The whole thing was completed, all arrangements for the experiment station, in December, 1921, so I went out to the pasture, the site, on December the 13th, 1921, and took some pictures of the cows out in the pasture and then two days later I had teams out leveling the land. I had to go to Washington to make a report. When I got back, why, we started the buildings the second of January. We planted a lot of stuff in '22, yes.

Baum: Was the girl you married a Bakersfield girl?

Camp: Yes. She was born in Pennsylvania but came to Bakersfield

Camp: when she was nine years old. I met her in Bakersfield. Her background was oil in Pennsylvania and she came to California with her family, who were transferred to Bakersfield by a major oil company. Sometime in March, 1922, as soon as our house was ready, we moved out on the Experiment Station near Shafter, and that's where our two oldest boys were born.

The Experiment Station as we laid it out in January, surveyed it and measured it out for the size of the plots, the width and the length and the pipelines and so on, as we did it then, is still today exactly as it was originally laid out. I was there just the other day and I'm very happy to see that. And every building at the Experiment Station now, with the exception of a new office building they're building because they've got a lot of scientific helpers there now--all the rest of the buildings I put up.

Baum: This was all planned for irrigation; you had no thought of dry land agriculture then?

Camp: No.

Baum: We'll start on the work of the Experiment Station at the next interview. And we have to cover the California One-Variety Cotton Law.

Prior to 1925 fertilizer had not been used in growing potatoes in Kern County. So it was assumed by all growers that they could not grow the crop on any land except their very richest or most fertile black soil. Potatoes were never grown on sandy land. That year W.B. Camp, Director of the Shafter Experiment station, invited L.W. Taylor, Kern County Agricultural Extension agent to cooperate with him in a rather extensive commercial fertilizer test at the Shafter Experiment Station. So far as is known this was the first potato fertilizer experiment in the county.

While the Shafter Experiment Station was and is primarily a cotton breeding and testing station yet this potato fertilizer work as well as many other commodity experiments have developed as a side benefit.



Shafter Experiment Station, 1925. Left: Home where Camp children were born. Right: Station Headquarters.



W.B. Camp checking breeding block of Acala cotton at Shafter Experiment Station. 1924.



Meeting on lawn of Experiment Station to explain potato fertilizer experiments. 1925.

DIRECTOR OF THE USDA COTTON EXPERIMENT STATION AT

SHAFTER, 1922-1928
(July 16, 1962 Interview)

Comments on Some California Agriculturalists

Deans of the U.C. College of Agriculture

Baum: You were warned before you came to California to expect no co-operation from the University. How accurate did that warning turn out to be?

Camp: I told you that I came up to Dr. Wickson and so on, and I'm assuming that you have the record of the other deans who were there and I don't need to mention them, except that Dr. Wickson had just retired. Dean Hunt, who had written lots of books, was here then and didn't stay too many years, but he was very co-operative with the entire project that I was planning to do, and called in a lot of his people and offered assistance.

Then following him was Dean Merrill. Dean Merrill was interested and very co-operative, but so far as I as a young man then saw it, he was not interested in California agriculture from the farmers' standpoint. I might have been wrong, but he only stayed here a short while and every time I talked to him he was more interested in botanical gardens and other things.

Baum: That's what everyone said, yes.

Camp: But contrary to what they told me in Washington, that the University of California would not co-operate, every single one of them went out of their way completely to co-operate in anything that I wanted. I cannot say one single word otherwise, wouldn't want to. Then of course when Dean Hutchison came along, why, that was just like an old friend, because he came right out of Missouri and was thoroughly imbued with the idea of doing everything possible to improve the lot of the

Camp: farmer.

Baum: Had you known him before he became dean?

Camp: No, no. I hadn't known him before, but we quickly became friends. He was much older than I but he gave me a lot of fatherly advice and a lot of co-operation--all I wanted at all times.

Baum: I think his background was a lot like yours.

Camp: Yes, in many ways.

John Pickett, Editor of the Pacific Rural Press

Camp: He was a classmate of John Pickett, who was editor of the Pacific Rural Press--I think they were classmates. They were schoolmates anyway, and friends, in college. John Pickett being interested in such matters as I was working on in all other phases of agriculture, he and I became very close friends. I guess I had no better friend in California than John Pickett, the father of Jack Pickett who is now the editor of the same paper--they've changed the name to California Farmer now, but while John Pickett was still living and editor of the paper it was Pacific Rural Press. When Jack Pickett finished high school, he came down to Fresno and worked for one summer, and his father told me some years afterwards that it was our influence that caused Jack to take the courses he did in school so that he could follow in his agricultural journalism. Probably wasn't, but nevertheless we were close friends.

Camp's Philosophy--"Grow a Quantity of a Quality Product"

Baum: Let me ask you about someone else I missed: Frank Swett.

Camp: Yes, but he was in prunes, pears, and apricots, I believe;

Camp: whatever it was, he was manager--pears hit my mind right quickly. I'm not sure, but he was manager of an association and I would see him at conventions where he was on the program and I had been asked to come to agriculture meetings and talk about cotton. But only in that way did I know Mr. Swett; intimately I did not.

Baum: One of the things he opposed was the agricultural extension services teaching the farmers how to have better crops because he said what they were facing was a surplus, and increasing the surplus was a mistake.

Camp: Well, I didn't know he did that, but that is where he and I are completely at odds. I have exactly the opposite viewpoint. Did then, always have, and do now, and I'm sure I always will, because it just doesn't make sense to stir around on a piece of ground and produce only a small part of what the potential of that piece of land is. It's just nonsense. As a matter of fact, I take credit for coining one phrase. Dr. Somebody in Washington who is given much credit for helping start the agricultural extension work--his name slips my mind--coined the term "make two blades of grass grow where one grew before." All through college we were fed this slogan. That is fine. When I came to California as a youngster, twenty-two years of age, my main work was not only to see if cotton would grow but after that and along with it my mission was to grow the best cotton possible, so it would serve the purpose we came out here to grow cotton for--.

Baum: You came out here during the war when there was a need.

Camp: That's right. But in the summer of 1920 the price of long staple cotton crashed completely. But even so, at all times right the first year I came out, and I had never made a speech before in my life until I came out here, the county agent got hold of me and took me out in the country to visit, and a bunch of farmers were there and they were desperate to know what to grow. They thought maybe cotton would grow, so they kept me talking for over two hours--asking questions and answering and so on, and that was my first speech. Thereafter I had to make lots of them, of course, but I said, "By all means and at all times, let's grow a bigger crop of quality product"--cotton I was talking about--"all the time." So I used in all of my talks and in all of my writings, all those many years, still do, "a farmer must produce a quantity"--meaning more, as much as possible--"of quality product on the same acre."

Baum: I guess what Mr. Swett objected to and fought bitterly with Mr.

Baum: Crocheron about was the irrigation of new lands, increasing the acreage.

Camp: Well, that's different. I have no fuss there.

Elwood Mead and Walter Packard

Baum: Did you have any thoughts back in those years on Elwood Mead's two projects, Delhi and Durham?

Camp: Yes, I did. I knew Dr. Mead pretty well. The man who was in Australia with him, Mr. George Kreutzer, was county agent in Bakersfield, in Kern County, when I first came there; he didn't stay there very long but we were very good friends. Subsequently his sister came there as home demonstration agent. They were very fine folks.

Dr. Mead's project at Delhi and at Durham--I knew a lot of the people who went on those places, tried to make a go of it, knew a lot of them very well. I was too young maybe to have ideas as to whether that kind of undertaking would pay off or not. I hadn't had the kind of experience that they had, but there were some of us very, very skeptical and stated it plainly, had been at meetings with Walter Packard, who was in charge at Delhi for a while. Walter Packard. His ideas of farming were somewhat different from my own. He was, I thought--I probably was wrong--quite theoretical in some of his ideas.

In the first year I came out here, before that project started, I believe he was assistant director of Extension. Anyway, along in the summer of 1917, after I had my cotton patches planted and growing, up and down the state, and over in Nevada and many places, Sacramento Valley, a lot of them, one day I received a telephone call from Walter Packard. I was at Bard at the U. S. Experiment Station that day, that's where I had official headquarters, because there was an experiment station down there, right near Yuma, on a reclamation project. Maybe that's the kind of project Mr. Swett was opposed to. That's where I was asked to get off the train and set up headquarters. I stayed there a very few days and then came on to the San Joaquin Valley and the Sacramento Valley.

Camp: But I was back over there one day and I received a telephone call from Walter Packard, whom I'd met and visited with several times. For some reason he asked me if I wanted a job with the University Extension Service. He wanted to hire me as Extension agronomist for the University of California. I told him I didn't know, I didn't think so but I certainly would be willing to talk to him about it. Then he went on and said, "Well, if you will, we will get you exempted from the draft, automatically."

And that ended it, because as quick as a flash I replied to him: "that's precisely what I didn't want, that I was at that moment negotiating with Washington trying to persuade them to let me go back to South Carolina, my home base, where I had registered, and get in the army, because everybody else, all my friends were, and that here I'd be left out. So Walter Packard's offer to me to become Extension agronomist ended with that offer of military exemption."

Camp Tries in Vain to Enlist in the Army--World War I

Camp: Following up that for a moment, why, I had been negotiating with Washington and they wouldn't let me do it, and as the days and weeks went by I became more convinced that I wanted to get in the army, that I ought to--that this was a desperate war situation--and that I would feel very much left out. So Washington kept writing me that they just couldn't do it, that I had to stay here, so I went to sending telegrams, and finally after several telegrams had passed back and forth I wired to them that I was leaving that afternoon at 3:20 on the train from Yuma to South Carolina, to enter the Army. Just as I got to the depot, when I got there, there was a telegram came to me before I got on the train saying, "We wired you this morning ordering you to await further instructions." I sent a wire right back, "Am leaving in a few minutes for South Carolina."

I got on the train and went on. Paid my own expenses. I got to South Carolina after three or four days on the train, found a telegram waiting for me there to report to Washington immediately.

Before I went to Washington, however, I got in the buggy

Camp: and went down to the town, four miles away, took my physical, got my name on the rolls, got in the army, and that night went on to Washington. When I got to Washington I was given a pretty stern lecture by my superiors and ordered to stay there for a few days and discuss the whole situation. I didn't realize they just wanted to go through a conditioning period for me, but a few days later I was called in and told to take the train back to California, that I was being ordered officially to do it by the military and the Department of Agriculture, and if I didn't do it voluntarily that they would put a uniform on me and I would come back to California as a private in the Army and with the same job. So again I was too young to know what to do further so I just, for the first time and I guess only time in my official life, I broke down and shed a lot of tears, because I wanted to get into the army. I thought that was the thing for me to do, but they insisted. I don't know that they convinced me, but they insisted that my military duty was being performed in this other work.

Baum: Well, I think they were right. Don't you?

Camp: Well, I have to think back as my thoughts were as a young man then, and I can't comment beyond that. I do not know what would have happened if I had done that. But that was my thinking and they knew it.

Then, as an aftermath--a little out of sequence--but the following year I had patches of cotton, more, bigger patches, and there was some commercial cotton planted in the valley and lots more patches up in the Sacramento Valley and some on the coast and more in Nevada and around, why--I spoke last week, I believe, of Fred Roullard furnishing me some land of his own to put in cotton plantings and I did, and I worked awfully hard at it, and made it grow very well. I irrigated it myself most of the time and did a lot of the physical labor. It was very successful, as were many other patches up and down the valley.

I remember one day that two men came out to the field there from the little town of Clovis to see what was going on, and they talked to me. They didn't get out of the car, and I didn't of course know what they wanted. I remember that one of the men was named Armstrong and he was owner of a newspaper.

Well, that was in the late summer, and I got to Washington in early January, as I always had to go to make a report. I had to stay there for three or four weeks every January. As soon as I walked in the office the boys in the office, chief clerk and some of the others, laughed at me and said, "Who's

Camp: your friend out there? Mr. Armstrong."

And it flashed into my mind who Armstrong was, but I said, "What about him?"

And they said, "Well, brother, we'll show you a letter that he wrote in here."

And they were kidding me, it was all fun with them. He had written a letter saying that this young man ought to be drafted and sent to the army, that there were a lot of older people who could do the work that he was doing. Well, naturally it didn't make me very happy and I asked why they didn't tell me about it at the time. Their reply was that they knew my temperament and knew my attitude and what I had wanted to do, so they feared what the consequences might be. But it was too late then, they thought, and they had a lot of fun out of it.

I didn't say any more until I left there at the end of January and came back to California. As soon as I could get to Fresno I went into the office of Mr. Roullard, the agricultural commissioner, and asked him who the man Armstrong was, all about him. He told me, and I didn't tell him why I wanted to know, and he said, "You know, he's not a very good citizen. He has two sons and he sent both of them to Canada in a hurry to avoid the draft, but they finally caught up with them and they had to come back and get in the Army."

I didn't say any more, I just got in my little Model T Ford, went on out to the town of Clovis, rode around the streets till I saw the name of this newspaper. I got out, went in, found him up in the other end of the building--he was the owner and editor of the paper. This may not be of record but I'll relate it anyway. I found him at the other end of this newspaper office--it was a small paper, of course--and I went straight up to him; whether he recognized me or not I do not know. I asked him quickly why he wrote a certain letter to Washington, and he had trouble answering but did answer finally, and immediately I did my chore and left him lying on the floor and went on out and got in my car and went back to Fresno.

I'm sure that shouldn't be in the record, but I had tried awfully hard, and that's one of the things I feared (sarcasm by other people) by not being in the army. I had just graduated from a military college, four years of it, and all of my classmates were officers of one kind or another, lieutenants and captains and majors and what-have-you--not that I wanted to be an officer, but I wanted to do my part. I wasn't sure but

Camp: what there were people who could do what this old man Armstrong said they could, but anyway I wasn't permitted. [Laughing] I'd forgotten that.

Still it does not make me a veteran, a war veteran, and I still have a sensitive feeling about it. Not a guilty feeling, but nevertheless a sensitive spot there. I can't carry these letters and telegrams around with me and say, "Read this," when somebody says, "Were you in World War I?"

J. Earl Coke, Extension Agronomist

Baum: I was wondering if you remembered Earl Coke.

Camp: Yes, very well. We've been good friends a long time. I think that he graduated from the University of California, and he later taught agriculture somewhere for a little while, and then he became Extension agronomist for the University and was a good one. He is a very fine man, one of the best men the University turned out, in my judgment.

Baum: He took the job that Walter Packard offered you. Was that in Kern County?

Camp: Oh no, that was all over the state. The whole thing. Extension agronomist for the state of California for the whole service. I don't mean that he took the job, it's the same job, yes, but it was several years later, and whether they had anybody between I've forgotten. But Earl Coke did such a fine job that the Spreckels Sugar Company hired him and then he left Spreckels Sugar Company, and when Crocheron died, I believe it was, the University pulled him back over there as Director of Extension. While in that job he was hired by Ezra Benson, Secretary of Agriculture under President Eisenhower, as Assistant Secretary of Agriculture in Washington, and he was in my judgment again the best man, the only good man on Benson's staff, and he made a good one. But of course the red tape being what it is he wasn't able to do the things he'd like to do, and finally he resigned and came back to California as director of Extension.

I guess maybe his leave of absence was up, but he came back, and it wasn't long after that that the Bank of America

Camp: persuaded him, offered him a job with them in charge of agriculture, and later he was made vice-president of the Bank of America, which he is today, in charge of all of their agricultural programs, research and agricultural credits and what-have-you.

Work of a USDA Agent

A Bigger Car for a Breaking Back

Camp: There was another thing that I didn't mention to you; in the early days every patch of cotton, in 1918, mind you, there were some patches planted commercially by farmers in the San Joaquin Valley. Beginning then and all the time for the next six or seven years, I personally supervised every single field of cotton planted and grown in the San Joaquin Valley--not that I could be there and give specific directions, but I inspected all of it and gave the best advice I could. I of course found that many of them had planted on land they shouldn't have planted, it wasn't properly prepared and what have you, but that is the kind of task I had.

And at the same time I was still conducting experiments all over the western states and I was driving a Model T Ford at first, the one that Mr. Nutting had provided for me, and shook it to pieces and traded it in for another one, a new one, and then another one the following year. I was traveling fifty to sixty thousand miles a year. It seemed like an impossible task, but I was doing it, and it just about broke me down physically.

My back, in the late spring of 1920, even though I had just traded for a new Model T, why, the doctor when I went to him told me that I had to quit that kind of doings; he said, "You have two choices: quit the job and get something that you're not traveling, riding in a car, or trade this Ford for a longer, bigger automobile that you can ride with more comfort, that won't shake you to pieces."

Anyway, I traded it immediately. He had me all strapped

Camp: up and it was like wearing a corset for many weeks. I traded it for a second hand Buick, which looked awfully long to me and was very comfortable by comparison with this other, and that I drove for the next couple of years. My back finally got well and I stayed on the job.

Helping the Farmers--Relief from a Grasshopper Plague

Baum: How did the farmers feel about you coming around? Were they friendly or did they think you were snooping in their business?

Camp: Very friendly. They were not only friendly but they would urge me, beg me, to tell them when I'd be back and to come back quickly, because none of them knew how to grow it and they were hoping to make money on it, and did, all of them that had good land and took care of it properly. So it was just a question of my getting back there as fast as I could, as often as I could, and helping them.

I remember one instance in 1919, I guess it was. A big field, about 125 acres, had been planted by a man near Bakersfield, Joe Valasnik. He had two sons, and I would go by and help them, advise them, and one day I was in Fresno and I got a telephone call. It was in July. They said, "Our cotton is ruined. The grasshoppers are in in swarms and it looks like they're going to eat it all up."

So I quickly got some information on how to kill grasshoppers. Again I appealed to my friend, Agricultural Commissioner Roullard, and it so happened that a new formula had just been developed and announced by the state and federal Departments of Agriculture, and he had it, on how to kill grasshoppers in the field. So he gave me the formula, I bought the oranges, lemons and grapefruit, the molasses, the bran, and the poison and whatever else it was that went into it. I hurriedly mixed the ingredients, threw the bags into my Model T, and off I went to Bakersfield with several sacks of grasshopper poison. I arrived on the scene there in late afternoon the same day they called. I saw--it looked like, well, it was, I'm sure, millions of grasshoppers just sitting as thick as they could sit all over the cotton plants, which then were about fifteen to eighteen

Camp: inches high and starting to bloom. I scattered the poison bait all around through the field. They hadn't got all over the field, but they had come in from one side and got about half way through. I scattered it through there.

I told them I didn't know what it would do but I hoped. Anyway we could see them hop down from the cotton plants and start nibbling at the sweet bran. Next morning I went back. All the grasshoppers were dead, and along with that there were thirteen great big hens lying out in the field dead also. They had gone out and eaten the grasshoppers! But anyhow the farmer was very happy that we'd killed the grasshoppers.

And then we had to determine whether to plow up the cotton that was skinned (every leaf and twig was eaten--only stalk and naked limbs left) or just what to do. Frankly I didn't know any more than they did what would happen, but I did advise them to leave it for a week or so and see if some of the nodes would send out new leaves and squares.

He left it. Fortunately it went ahead and developed into a fine crop, and he made about a bale and a half to the acre on the entire field, nearly 125 acres. I was happy that my advice had been right that time. And of course he was forever a close friend, he and his whole family. But it was in that spirit that I went to these different fields, and not snooping to see what they were doing, but to help.

Baum: Were the farmers in Kern County interested in new agricultural methods, or were they the old hidebound--?

Camp: Well, they were very much interested in anything. Yes, new methods. They were very progressive. They hadn't been doing a lot of farming and a lot of the farmers there were new settlers, and they were anxious to do anything, everything, that would make a success for them. They were a fine bunch to work with, and I'm sure if it were to do over today I couldn't, and probably no other young man could really accomplish, get them to do as much as I was able to persuade them, because they just didn't know and they thought maybe I did. An interesting thing: every time I would go to a meeting, and there were lots of them, there would be a lot of ballyhoo about the government cotton man coming to make a speech and particularly in new places where I hadn't been before, why, when I'd get there there'd be usually a pretty good crowd, sometimes huge crowds of men and women, and I'd see a lot of heads nodding and wondering and finally someone, in many instances, would say,

*Due to misnumbering, page 64 is omitted.

- Camp: "Well, we expected to see an older man with a white beard or something, and not a youngster coming down here." It never was insulting and they didn't mean it in that spirit, but that statement was made lots of times.
- Baum: It always seemed to me that California has been ahead in its human element; I wonder if you could have made as much progress back in South Carolina.
- Camp: No, I'm sure I couldn't. I'm sure that you're completely right in your thoughts on the matter. The time was right, the attitude was right, and they needed another crop and so it was easy to get the things done that we did.

Speech-making on How and Whether to Plant Cotton

- Camp: During that same period, a thing that as I look back on it was quite interesting. Areas such as up at Stockton, for instance, where now we know cotton can't grow at all--it'll grow, but you can't mature and harvest a crop of cotton up there; there's not enough heat and too much damp fall weather and the bolls, enough of them, just don't mature. Anyhow, they invited me up there, the real estate board and I think the Rotary Clubs, and the Chamber of Commerce, they all went together and they had a big meeting in the hotel in Stockton, and again this youngster was introduced to the crowd after the noon meal. The president of the real estate board introduced me. I could tell by his introduction that he had expected and was hoping that I was going to tell them that the cotton would do well all around there and that there would really be a new crop for them. But it so happened that I had made a lot of experiments all around, on up in the Sacramento Valley and all over the two valleys, and had just about correctly determined the limits of cotton growing possibilities, at least the kind of cotton that we have at the present time. Someday they may develop something else that will grow and mature in the Sacramento Valley. But anyway when I got through with my talk it was just like a storm had settled over the crowd, because the real estate men had expected to go out and maybe reap a harvest of selling land for cotton, and my story was exactly what they didn't want to hear.

Camp: They were all nice to me afterwards and I got away without scars, but I know many of the promoters were not satisfied. Time has proven me completely right.

I had another experience like that up in Willows, in the Sacramento Valley. The newspaper editor up there had written a lot of stories and a lot of absentee owners were wanting another crop to go along with the rice and the other grains, so they had the government cotton man come up to talk to a big meeting. I went and took a man with me, J. S. Townsend, whom I had brought out here from South Carolina to help supervise the building of some cotton gins; we went up to Willows. Big crowds, lots of people, from San Francisco and all over, because most of that land in there apparently at that time was owned by absentee owners.

Well, we had the meeting in town, and again my story was not what those promoters wanted to hear. I just told them to not waste their money, I didn't feel that they could make it go commercially. That wasn't what they wanted to hear, that wasn't what the editor of the newspaper had been whooping it up about, and prophesying, the possibilities, so when I got through he lambasted me personally and so did others, but the next day his newspaper came out with the most blistering editorial I think that I have ever seen. It was written about and against my statements. But I told the story as I knew it.

Later I had to, did, make many speeches all over the Sacramento Valley under the auspices of, and as a matter of fact doing it for, the Extension Service, Professor Crocheron's office. They had telephoned to Washington and asked if they could authorize me to go into the valley and make lots of speeches, attend lots of meetings, talking about the possibilities of cotton. Wherever I went in the Sacramento Valley I told them that our experiments had shown that it could be grown in places and sometimes maybe it would mature properly, but on the whole it was not yet commercially a particularly profitable crop. Again I disappointed a lot of people.

And there was another one. Mr. Horst, who was the hop king of California and of the west coast, I guess, he owned lots of land all up and down the Sacramento Valley and on up into Oregon, and he arranged with Washington for me to go with him on a week or more tour of his properties and others to see if I thought cotton would grow there. Apparently it was during the time--I've forgotten now--of prohibition and hops were not profitable for some reason or other. Anyway, I went on this

Camp: trip with him in a big black automobile with a chauffeur, and I was dined--I started to say wined, but I don't drink wine nor whiskey--anyway, they showed me a good time, tried to, for several days, and boosting his land and boosting the possibility of cotton all along.

I made my notes. I got back and he wanted a report, my opinion, and I said, "No, I'll send my report to Washington. It'll take me a day or two to write it completely."

So I wrote my report, sent it to Washington to the man through whom he had appealed to get me to come and make a survey. They wired him back or sent him a letter, I guess, I've forgotten, but anyway the report came back to him that my report was not favorable. Cotton could not be expected to grow commercially, profitably, in those areas. I saw him later, and he was very, very--not exactly bitter, but he wasn't as good a friend of mine as he had offered to be before.

I had many experiences like that. I think that would be enough, but there were lots of them. Promoters were wanting to get cotton as a new crop, and if we had not made the experiments in all of these different places from the beginning, we couldn't have answered them properly and probably a lot more money would have been wasted.

In spite of what we said in the Sacramento Valley some absentee landlords persuaded growers to go in up there, imported some growers from Texas, Oklahoma, somewhere, and there were several hundred acres, I guess more than that, a thousand or so acres altogether planted and a cotton gin built and so on, and they did harvest some and they ginned a little, but everywhere they did it it was unprofitable. The growers went broke every effort they made.

There was a bank in San Francisco that headed up the Dodge Land Company. [Laughing] And they brought in a promoter, a high-pressure manager, and he planted several hundred acres and spent many, many thousands of dollars for these people on cotton. It turned out just as we had predicted. So it did over near Sacramento, another big land company had lots of ranch property, Natomas Company. They had a high power manager, promoter, and they had me come and they put me up in the Sacramento Country Club and again in fine style, more so than I'd ever witnessed before. I didn't know what to do with all of the things that were in some of those rooms. But anyway, I went out with them and went all over it and so on,

Camp: and recommended that they not spend any money for cotton. But in spite of that, a year or two later they spent a lot of money and planted several hundred acres. One year was all they did it, though.

Baum: I would imagine that some of those promoters, those that were selling land to settlers, would have been just as happy to have you report favorably whether it was true or not.

Camp: Well, they wanted me to say cotton would grow, and of course I didn't.

Unfortunately for them and fortunately for my own reputation, at least, I didn't make that kind of report. It didn't take long to establish the fact that cotton would not grow successfully, mature properly so you could harvest it, very far north of Merced. In fact, Merced, even there some falls they have difficulty getting the crop harvested. But from the very beginning it was quite clear to anyone who wanted to observe it properly and without any prejudice one way or another, that Kern County was the ideal place in California, more so than in any other county further north, no matter if it's twenty miles or fifty miles, Kern County is by itself a wonderful area for cotton, and of course for many other crops too.

Riverside County now raises some cotton, down in Coachella Valley; a little, not much. I did a lot of my breeding work at Coachella at the experiment station there that was established for dates. That's where I got the idea that I ought to have-- must have--a concentrated place in the San Joaquin Valley to carry on, conduct cotton experiments and do breeding, and that was the why of the Shafter Station, from the work that I had done there I saw the necessity of it.

Organizing a Cotton Co-operative, 1920

Baum: I saw in the news reports of January, 1920, a cotton marketing co-operative was organized in Bakersfield. Do you recall that organization?

Camp: Yes, I do. I helped organize it, and Mr. Arthur Swain was the

Camp: first manager of it. He was a local man there, didn't know cotton, but he was a retired man and there wasn't a great deal of cotton and he did quite well in his job.*

Baum: This was just to market the cotton?

Camp: Just to market the cotton that was grown there.

Baum: It didn't have anything to do with the seed at that time?

Camp: No, not at that time. Well, they recommended seed and told where it could be bought, but that organization had nothing to do with selling seed. The present cottonseed organization didn't come into being until 1925, and we organized that simultaneously with the passage of the legislation setting up the one-variety law, but that's something we'll come to a little later.

Work with the Farm Bureau

Baum: Were you permitted to be a member of any of these farm organizations or were you not allowed to join?

Camp: I didn't know what my limitations were officially, in fact I never gave it a second thought, but when the Farm Bureau asked me to join, I just naturally joined. I'd been a farmer all my life, and I'm still farming, and I thought it was the thing to do and I did. Then when the county fair came along, after we'd moved out to the Shafter Experiment Station, why, I became chairman of the Farm Bureau there and a director of the Kern County Farm Bureau, and chairman of the Shafter fair committee. All the communities worked hard to see which one could come up with the best display at the county fair, held in Bakersfield every fall. It was a wonderful thing from an educational standpoint. That's the only reason that I was in it. Cotton was

*Members of the Cotton Co-op were S. P. Frisselle, manager of Kearney Park Farms; W. G. Ferguson of Firebaugh; J. P. Benson of Benson Land Company; and organized by W. B. Camp. (WKB)

Camp: playing a prominent part in Kern County and California agriculture and so were potatoes that we were working with at the Shafter Experiment Station. Three consecutive years Shafter won the prize. We were all very happy about it.

Let me emphasize that this did not come easy. Mrs. Camp helped me organize a large committee to plan and build. This committee met at different homes once or twice a week for two months or more just prior to the fair. This led to many other fine projects in the community.

Baum: You were an officer in the Farm Bureau?

Camp: Yes, I was a director of the county Farm Bureau.

Baum: Was there a Grange there?

Camp: Yes, there was, but I was not a member of the Grange.

Baum: Was that an active organization?

Camp: The Kern County Grange at that time was not as active as the Farm Bureau. Of course, the Farm Bureau had been organized, I think, by the Extension Service and in California for the first many years the Farm Bureau was the practical or operating arm, you might say, of the Extension Service. Not necessarily one and the same but there wasn't an active Farm Bureau except as the county agent and the home demonstration agent made it active. This relationship or marriage served a good purpose in those early days.

Baum: Wasn't it necessary to have a Farm Bureau before you could have a county agricultural institution? I think they weren't allowed to send an agent into a county until there was a Farm Bureau to request them and put up part of the funds.

Camp: I guess you're right, insofar as California was concerned then. I know a little about Farm Bureaus in other states, and I don't believe they have or had the same arrangements as existed in California. In California now this Farm Bureau-Agricultural Extension marriage is no longer compulsory.

The Department of Agriculture in Washington didn't like the arrangement they had out here. I've heard them talk about it a lot. It seemed that, oh, there were people who didn't want the Extension Service running the Farm Bureau. I'm not sure that I can give you the real answer.

Baum: Well, some said there was competition between the Department of Agriculture and the state agricultural extensions. I don't know if this was in principle or personalities.

Camp: Personalities, personalities. That was the reason the statement was made the day before I left Washington the first time, "you're making two big mistakes sending Camp to California, and one of them is you're asking him to co-operate with the University Extension Service and the experiment stations, and he can't do it. Nobody ever has and he can't." So I think you've waded right into the problem. However, as I said the other day, so far as I'm concerned I'm convinced it's true; the reason for that was those know-it-alls, many of them, who came out from Washington and strutted their stuff around and made themselves obnoxious.

Baum: When did you get the one-variety cotton law enacted?

Camp: '26. '25 was--it was in 1925 that we succeeded in getting all of the Farm Bureaus where they grew cotton to completely accept the story, agree with it, and help to boost the idea of the one-variety law, that we needed a law to protect the growers of good cotton. We got the University folks all to agree with us, and they assisted in their way. This proved to be excellent co-operation. They didn't try to put over legislation but whenever they were asked questions they answered in a manner that was co-operating with our idea. But we got the county supervisors up and down the state to agree that we needed one variety, a law to protect that one variety, and then we got the state senators and assemblymen from the cotton-producing counties to agree to it.

One-Variety Cotton Law

Passage of Law in 1925

Baum: What exactly was the reason for this one-variety cotton law?

Camp: I wish that I could put my hands on a manuscript that I wrote and developed during those first few years and finally presented

Camp: to several group meetings, cotton growers and others, in which I showed why cotton crosses, why and how it cross pollinates, and in this document I stated that cotton would cross pollinate just as far as bees would fly, and that I had evidence from my own experiments where it had crossed seven miles, Egyptian cotton with Acala cotton. That document seemed to tell the story in such a way that the folks felt it necessary to get a law to protect.

Now, you ask the question, why is it necessary? If you have, just as we do in the San Joaquin Valley, just one variety of cotton, Acala, we can standardize. It's all one length and easier to process. The gins can be organized in such a way, and are, set up to handle one type of cotton properly. The cotton mills want a standardized product, whether it's longer or shorter, whatever it is, they want to be sure that they're buying a big lot of cotton that is all the same thing so that they can run it through their mills and not have so much waste.

Acala cotton was chosen because it was the most productive and the best quality of all the thirty-odd varieties tested in California by us. We could have selected another variety and it too would have been good, but not as good as the Acala. But another good variety by itself would have been better than the ultimate result of planting Acala along with half a dozen others, all in the same community. Standardized quality is what I'm trying to say is the reason why we need just the one variety.

Baum: Somewhere I read that Pima would have been better for the Bakersfield area, but not for the surrounding area.

Camp: Pima Egyptian cotton was what the government wanted to find places where we could grow it, because that's the quality that was needed then to manufacture strong cloth for airplane wings for World War I, and for ambulance tires and for the airplane tires. They had to have strong material.

Pima Egyptian cotton did grow well in Kern County. In fact it did well in most of the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley. Yes, it did pretty well in parts of Fresno County too, but when the war was over and the necessity was not urgent for long staple cotton any more everyone became interested in the possibility of another variety that might be more profitable.

Fortunately our intensive experiments with other varieties had equipped us with a ready and acceptable answer. We told the growers, and proved it, that they could grow twice as much

Camp: per acre almost, a little less maybe, of the Acala than they could of Egyptian, and that they could grow it in about six weeks less time; that made all the difference in the world. Also about the third or fourth year (probably 1920) after we made our first planting in the San Joaquin Valley, there came a bad fall and we didn't get to harvest all of the Egyptian cotton because of the foggy weather and some fall rains, so it made it doubly important to have a cotton that could be grown and harvested in a shorter season. And that's why the Acala became so popular and is so profitable down there. That's why we like it so much better now than we would the Pima Egyptian. It takes twice as much labor to pick the Pima Egyptian if you've got to do it by hand, (the bolls are only about one half as big as Acala bolls) and it is so long, it's an inch and a half in length, that the machines we have now are still such that it would twist that cotton up quite a bit. We couldn't mechanize it as completely as we do the Acala.

Baum: You became convinced that you had to have one variety? Then you would have had to first persuade the growers that that was a good idea.

Camp: I had to plant that idea everywhere, and I made it my job from the time I got here. The government wanted growers to plant Egyptian cotton for war purposes; it was my job not only to see if it would grow in this area but to see that the growers would be happy to grow the variety that was needed. Then when the war was over and Egyptian wasn't needed for this purpose we had proven through our cotton variety tests that another variety, Acala, would be more profitable year after year.

I made it part of my job every hour of my time to plant the idea everywhere, with everybody, that in order to get a quantity of quality product on the same acre we would have to standardize on a variety. I tried to respond to every call from everywhere. Farmers' organizations, Chambers of Commerce, and service clubs. It was quite an educational program.

So it was kind of second nature (or perhaps I should say old hat) with everybody when it got around to 1925 and we wanted to pass the law. Everybody said--no, not everybody, but many people say it is unconstitutional. We don't believe so, we didn't think so then and we don't now, but anyhow it has served a very wonderful purpose, regardless of constitutionality, and only one time since the law was passed have the growers, or has anyone in the San Joaquin Valley, tried to defy the law and plant something else.

Baum: The law was passed in 1925?

Camp: Yes, and we set up at that same time a California cotton planting seed distributors organization, to be the commercial, the practical arm of the breeding work that I was doing at the Experiment Station at that time. We wrote rules and regulations for that organization then concerning qualifications for seed growers. Among other things, he must be a good farmer, must have clean land, isolation from other cotton fields, and thoroughly cleaning up the gin before ginning was a must. All of the many things we put into it, clean of weed seeds, the field must be kept clean and all of that, made everyone know the growers meant business.

I'm very happy to say that the instructions that were set up then, the constitution and by-laws and regulations and requirements, restrictions, have been lived up to, adhered to, and followed right until today. Of course, there've been some improvements, some refinements, but basically it is operating today exactly as it was set up to operate in 1925, and it has been a wonderful help to the cotton industry in general. Also it has meant hundreds of millions of dollars to California. Cotton growers in all of the other states have to pay very high prices to get what they call new seed, good seed, certified seed; there all of the cotton breeders are private breeders and they're in the business to make money. I have no objection to this but I am primarily interested in the individual cotton growers.

Out here all of the breeding is done at the Station, and the University and the Department of Agriculture and the growers all work together. However, it's not a bureaucratic job by any means. Actually, the cotton growers put up most of the money (approximately two hundred thousand dollars per year) through this seed organization for the operation of the U.S.D.A. Experiment Station, as well as paying for cotton research by state agencies. The University puts in a little money--though not much.

Since the seed organization puts up most of the research money to pay for the University men who work at the Station, it is only natural that they would work together. In that way it is a completely co-operative organization by the University, the Department of Agriculture, and cotton growers. When I say cotton growers I mean also to include oil mills, gins, and everybody--the cotton industry. It's a completely integrated function of the entire cotton trade.

Attempt to Get Around Law

Baum: When was this attempt to break the one-variety law?

Camp: 1938. A bit of background is necessary to understand the reasoning and strategy of the plotters.

The Depression came along, and prices of all crops got very low. Some commodities you couldn't sell. In 1933 when the Department of Agriculture said we will have a farm program, an emergency program, to help the farmers out of this depression, rules and regulations were set up governing cotton as well as other crops. These programs started in '33--the cotton grower could only grow a certain percentage of the cotton land that he had planted the year before, or the average of a combination of years, and so it was through the years and so it is today. In the making of those regulations Egyptian cotton, or rather, cotton of one and one-half inch length and longer, was exempted because there wasn't much of it being grown in America; in fact we were again importing some of that long staple from Egypt. But World War II came along and we weren't sure we were going to get the cotton from Egypt, so regulations were written exempting inch and a half cotton.

All right. Some of the more ambitious oil mill operators in California figured that they could take advantage of this regulation by planting a lot of Egyptian cotton on land in Kings County in particular, on the old Tulare Lake bed, around that area, and that even if growers didn't make much money on it that year they would have established a base, a record of growing cotton. In other words, a cotton history for your acreage; how much you're permitted to plant is based on the acreage planted to cotton in past years.

Well, this looked like a very fine opportunity for these fellows to get lots more seed for their oil mills, and more cotton to gin at their gins. They went out on a campaign to get the growers to agree with the idea. Considering the fact that this same oil mill company financed most of the cotton growers in that area, it was easier for them to talk the growers into going along. They sold them on the idea--at least enough of them that they got a senator from Kings County to introduce a bill permitting them to grow Pima Egyptian cotton.

Baum: They weren't interested in the Pima cotton, they were interested in the cotton history.

Camp: Well, I think that that's the way I would have to interpret it,

Camp: but they didn't put it on that basis, of course. Their arguments were on the basis that they could make more money growing Egyptian cotton. But since I'd had something to do with the writing of the original law and had written into this regulation that particular exemption, I knew what they were up to. J. G. Boswell Cotton Company, Los Angeles, California, was the name of the firm.

Well, the senator from Bakersfield, Senator J. J. Waggy, called some of us on the phone and told us what was up, asked what we thought, and we told him. He asked if we'd come to Sacramento right quick and we did. A special meeting of the Senate was called, and it went into the afternoon and into the evening and it was after midnight before we got through the arguments, the most impassioned plea that some of us ever made, and then the senators went out to vote. They came back after two o'clock in the morning and the One-variety Act was still intact. In other words, they didn't win.

They had a bulletin that I had written earlier, at the beginning when I came out here, urging the growers to plant Egyptian cotton; they had used paragraphs or statements from this bulletin showing that Egyptian cotton could be grown. So I had considerable arguing to do, citing subsequent years of bad weather, particularly in the Kings County Tulare Lake basin, where they do have even more fog than they have down below.

Baum: Well, if they'd switched to Pima they would have all had to switch together, wouldn't they?

Camp: They wanted to have a special consideration for their county, Kings. That's what they claimed. But as it turned out, if they had planted Pima cotton that year, it was a bad fall, they wouldn't have got half their cotton harvested before Christmas and every grower would have lost his shirt.

Baum: Were there any other attempts to change that law?

Camp: That's the only one of any consequence. A few people have brought in some other cotton from Mississippi, seed rather, and planted little patches to try it out, but the agricultural commissioner and the seed organization found the patches in every case and have made them send the cotton out of the valley for ginning, under quarantine, so there have been no real attempts to break it.

Baum: At Shafter don't they try different kinds of cotton?

Camp: Oh yes. Well, the law says, it was written that way, that the University and the Department of Agriculture and all of them working together will try many different varieties all the time, every year, hunting for something better, even within the Acala or another variety. It makes no difference. Whenever they can and do find something better, then they will recommend it officially and then the whole Valley will accept it and change over to the new one. There's nothing bad about that. They're just after the best cotton there is for California growers.

Hoover Farm--1919

Camp: During 1919, I believe it was, I planted and supervised quite a field of Pima cotton at Kearney vineyard, Kearney Park, owned by the University of California.

Baum: Who was operating that park?

Camp: Parker Frisselle. He's dead now. He was very active in everything, and he was very helpful and very co-operative to me always. The University, under Dr. J. W. Gilmore, head of the agronomy department, planted a second field of cotton that same year too. He, Dr. Gilmore, supervised that, and I supervised the other one. We weren't trying to compete one with the other, it just happened that that's the way it was. Dr. Gilmore and I did try slightly different cultural methods. For some reason or other, and I can't tell you exactly what it was, his field of cotton did not do well and I made a big crop. From then on the University of California looked upon me as their cotton man and they stated so all the time, Extension Service and all the rest of them--even though I was on the payroll of the Department of Agriculture.

Following that--that's the field of cotton I sold for them for \$1.05 1/4 cents a pound, Pima cotton--Herbert Hoover wanted to go into farming, or rather Ralph Merritt* and Parker Frisselle persuaded Herbert Hoover that he ought to buy a farm

*Merritt, Ralph P., "After Me, Cometh a Builder," typed transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted by Corinne L. Gilb, University of California General Library Regional Cultural History Project, (Berkeley, 1962). In Bancroft Library.

Camp: in the San Joaquin Valley and plant cotton, and that the three of us would join him and take care of it. Well, he did, and I bought thirteen hundred acres, selected it for Hoover, down in Kern County, and it was called the Hoover Farm. One hundred acres of that was set aside, across from all the rest of it, for me, and I was going to take charge and be the manager of that whole thing. But right after we bought this land the cotton price went completely--and particularly the Egyptian--to nothing, almost, and they decided to make a fruit farm out of it--and I decided to stay with the government. [Laughing]

Baum: This was to be private work?

Camp: Oh yes. I would have to quit the government.

That one hundred acres was going to be my bonus when the project paid off; I was going to grow cotton on most of it and that would be my one hundred acres. Ralph Merritt, who was comptroller of the University of California, I believe, at the time, and Parker Frisselle were going to stay in their jobs, and I do not know just in what manner they were going to participate, but I imagine they were going to have an interest in it too.

Baum: Was this the first investment Hoover made in Kern County?

Camp: Yes. That was the original Hoover farm. I selected the land, and I was to be the farmer. Some of the best belonged to the Kern County Land Company. Mr. H. A. Jastro was general manager of the Kern County Land Company. It was a most interesting thing. Julius Barnes, the grain man, from Duluth, Minnesota, put some money into the project too. I don't know whether it was 50-50. Thirteen hundred acres it was then.

Baum: Was it going to be mostly cotton?

Camp: It was going to be primarily a cotton operation to start with. That's why they asked me if I would go with them. Selling cotton for \$1.05 1/4 cents a pound, why, if it had gone like that for a couple of years, all of us could have made a lot of money right quick. But it didn't do that!

Baum: Were you permitted to own private land if you were working for the government? Could you have bought land and taken care of it on Saturday and Sunday, or hired someone to take care of it?

Camp: People do do that, and did then, I'm sure. However, I will say to you that I did subsequently buy a piece of land--in

Camp: fact, bought two pieces. One of them, forty acres, was only a half a mile from the experiment station, the other one, one hundred and sixty acres, was two miles from the experiment station. The one that was half a mile from the station, I had my feet on the ground there one time each of two or three years that I owned it. Both were leased. I scrupulously stayed away because I didn't want anybody to say that I was doing a private business and being paid by the government. I looked upon it the same way that I did writing an article (I returned many nice checks to magazines and newspapers) or making a speech while I was in the government; I thought that I was being paid to educate people as best I could and it was my job to do it. But while I was employed by the government I did not want to go out privately and farm, though others were doing it. I didn't. I guess I was just raised wrong; I don't know.

Baum: Does the present man there own any land?

Camp: I don't know, but I doubt it. John Turner, who's there now, is an excellent man, one of the finest in America. He's doing a splendid job.

Baum: It seems in a way a little unfair that these men that put in so much time on work that reaps so much benefit for someone else can't make a little bit for themselves.

Camp: Well, I guess so, but on the other hand, when a man is dedicated to his job, that kind of work you don't need any diversion, whether you're going to make a profit out yonder or lose something, or what-have-you. It certainly would take some of one's attention away from the scientific activities you're trying to do.

Baum: In other words, that job is a twenty-four-hour-a-day job.

Camp: With me it was. It was just to be either dedicated to the government work or quit and do something else.

Work of a USDA Agent, Continued

Camp Praised for Cotton Bulletin by Professor Frank Adams

Camp: I was thinking in terms of advising these people about growing

Camp: cotton. I had to, did, write a bulletin first, telling them how to grow Pima Egyptian cotton, and then when the market went bad on that and we decided to switch to Acala I wrote a bulletin telling them, just outlining how to grow Acala cotton.

I remember an instance--I hesitate to mention it and yet it has been an occasion that is very pleasant to think back on ever since it happened. A bunch of the University people were coming south on a tour through the Valley, county agents and some of the irrigation specialists and others up here at the University and at Davis, and the group was being led, apparently, by Professor Frank Adams, head of the irrigation department, University of California, and the recognized authority on irrigation in the entire U.S.

I came up from Bakersfield and met them in Merced, and I got there about eight o'clock at night. I was awfully, awfully tired. I've forgotten what I had been doing but I was just a physical wreck, and he met me in the lobby and held on to my hand very tight and warm, and he said, "Bill, I want to tell you that I have just read a manuscript that you've written on the production of Acala cotton in the San Joaquin Valley in California. They sent it to me from Washington to read before it's published and to see if I have any criticism, "and," he said, "I want you to know that I'm writing back to them and telling them that it is the finest, most practical, simple-language agricultural bulletin I've ever read in my life."

Of course, to me as a youngster, even as tired as I was, it made me feel awfully good. I didn't know Professor Adams very well. Some of his men had been working with me some. But it just made me awfully happy. I'd only put down the facts as I knew them, in simple language. I didn't know how to do otherwise, but I shall never forget Professor Adams for that statement and the way he held on to my hand. He didn't have to say it, and I'm foolish enough now to believe that he meant it. I'm sure he did.

Baum: I think he meant everything he ever said.

Camp: I have never been able to visit with Professor Adams much, but it was always very pleasant when I did. I enjoyed him so much.

That was one of the bonuses that I got in my work. Instead of somebody paying me for writing an article or making a speech,

* Adams, Frank, "Frank Adams, University of California, on Irrigation, Reclamation, and Water Administration," typed transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted by Willa Klug Baum, University of California General Library Regional Cultural History Project, (Berkeley, 1959). In Bancroft Library.

Camp: the thing he told me was worth a thousand times more to me than any dollars they could have given me.

Assistants at the Shafter Experiment Station

Camp: C. F. Dunshee and Sam Beckett, the two of them were assigned-- this is jumping over later--by Professor Adams to do cotton irrigation work with me. I had asked them to send somebody down and help us out, determine how much water to give cotton, when to give it, and so on, scientifically, that I was giving out information which was based on just my eyes and observations, and we really ought to get at it scientifically, so he, Professor Adams, assigned those two men and they did a wonderful job.

Baum: Did they work right at Shafter?

Camp: They did their work right at Shafter on the Station. We gave them all the assistance we could, all they asked for, and their contribution was very very great to the cotton industry.

Baum: Were they University of California men?

Camp: They were entirely University of California, located at Davis. I always said that if all of the professors and their co-workers at the University were as good as Professor Adams and his staff, certainly taxpayers would have no regrets. They were the best I knew anywhere in the United States. They were all dedicated to their job.

Baum: Did you have any aides on the Shafter Station to assist you?

Camp: Yes, we had several, from time to time. I had to do almost all of the cotton breeding for the first few years. We started out with a very skeletonized staff and never did get many, didn't have any appropriations, just a few thousand dollars was all we had. Now they've got down there, and fortunately so, a very big staff working on all of the problems of cotton diseases and insects, and hybridizing cotton, getting new strains. It's done an entirely different way now to what it was when we were there. Ours was mostly on a selection basis and now they use many different cottons and breed into it

Camp: the kind of--well, whatever they want to get, a more erect plant or something else. Now they've bred one without any hairs on the leaves, it's got a slick leaf, and they also have bred one which is coming into commercial production--cottonseed has never been good for chicken feed and for hog feed, it has an element in it which I for the moment can't recall, but it was poisonous to them. Now they've got one that will go right on into the feeds and is good, it's coming into commercial production. "Nothing so constant as change," you know.

Baum: If you had men on the Station, did they come with their families?

Camp: Oh yes, oh yes, we built some houses there for them to live in. Then they had some single people living in what we called bunkhouses.

Baum: Were there professional...

Camp: Some of them were professional, scientifically trained, and others we'd train after they got there to help us with some of the work. But we never had a staff in the same sense that they've got now at all. I got most of my scientific help in other lines from the University and from other offices in the Department of Agriculture, who would send the men out to do certain work, mostly with other crops.

I think that I ought to say that all through this, the San Joaquin Light and Power Company, headquarters at Fresno, they were an outfit that was also looking for additional land to furnish power to for irrigation so they could sell power. They saw possibilities in cotton as a crop, after a year or two of experiments, so they assigned a man to me most of the time, or a great deal of the time, and anytime that I would make a trip, in or outside California, he was available to go with me. They did a great deal to help sell the idea, if it needed selling.

At no time did I ever try to promote cotton. I was merely telling and showing how to do it, but these others would, in their way, and for their purposes, promote cotton, because they thought it was a good crop and, in the case of the power company, they were wanting to sell power. In other words, private enterprise at work.

Baum: Was the greatest use of power going to be for pumping?

Camp: Yes, but this led to power usage for many other things. The San Joaquin Light and Power Company, Fresno, which later merged with the Pacific Gas and Electric Company in San Francisco, was very co-operative and helpful. Cotton has been the biggest user of power of any commodity or any industry for them all these years. A tremendous amount of electricity is used pumping water out of the ground for cotton.

Baum: What did this man do for you?

Camp: One thing for sure, he helped me with a lot of quick transportation. He didn't really do anything for me, but when you're in this kind of work and in a strange country, the wide open spaces, it's comforting to have some intelligent person with you, some knowledgeable individual, to kind of back up your own judgment in these matters. I was always happy to have someone from the University who could make trips where I had to go; it was just good to have somebody along. Not just as a companion, but as a companion or co-worker in my thinking through the agricultural problems, the cotton problems. If that makes sense the way I've said it. I was never lonesome so far as needing somebody to talk to, because I was too busy.

Offer to Go to Australia

Camp: Somewhat before that, about 1920 it was, in the summer, the British government became interested in cotton for Australia. They saw what was going on in California, a new area, and they were thinking of cotton in Australia and New Zealand, also, I believe, Queensland. Anyway, they sent some folks to see me and asked if I would join them, be interested in a job to go to Australia and try to do for them what I had done in California, Arizona, and New Mexico, and especially in the San Joaquin valley.

It was rather tempting, they made a very attractive offer, and I was a young man, unmarried at that time, and not about to be, I thought. I thought about it, just as I thought about coming to California when the Department of Agriculture folks asked me to come here. It was a challenge.

So I went in and talked to Mr. Jastro, manager of the

Camp: Kern County Land Company, who, by the way, I should have said, became one of the closest friends that a youngster could ever have away from home. He practically adopted me, and appeared to be as fond of me as I was of him, and I just saw a lot of him. But I went in and asked him, I said, "Mr. Jastro, I want to talk to you."

And he said, "Well, sit down."

So I sat down, and proceeded to tell him the story. He didn't say a word till I got through, then he asked me, "Well, are you happy in your present work?"

And I said, "Extremely so. You know that. I couldn't be any happier. I'm completely free to go and come, and have no boss. I didn't know anybody when I first came here, so I've had to go on my own; it's been a challenge but very intriguing and interesting, and I'm happy."

And he said, "Well, I wouldn't go then."

So I made up my mind right then and there that I wouldn't go to Australia. These English people asked me if I could recommend somebody, and I did. I recommended a friend of mine who was in Arizona; he went, got married, and is still over there.

Bad News for Cotton in Texas

Camp: Another thing I forgot to mention in our last interview that took place before we had the Shafter Experiment Station.

I had to go in 1920 down to Laredo, Texas, from California, to inspect a field of Egyptian cotton they thought was very fine. Texas people had written the U.S.D.A. in Washington, and they in turn asked me to inspect and report. This I did.

Editors of the newspapers were there from all over the state--not all of them, but a lot of them, and the consul general and others. Quite a crowd. Mr. Victor Schoffelmayer, agricultural editor from the Dallas News, was down there.

Camp: It's right on the Mexican border. I took another boy with me, Bob Martin, from the experiment station at San Antone, down there. We went into the field and spent all morning looking around and counting and measuring. We went to dinner (lunch) and a big big dinner it was they gave us, over at Nuevo Laredo--the Mexican consul gave us this big dinner celebration. So we go back to the field after dinner and we do some more counting and calculating, and then I came out of the field and told them I was ready to give my report. They thought it would be very favorable indeed, these wonderful plants and everything, so when I told them, I said, "Well, you've got a wonderful stalk and the potential of a big crop, but you aren't going to pick any cotton at all, because beginning a few days ago, I don't know when, a certain percentage of the bolls, nearly mature as of that date, already had rotten spots on them, black spots going into rot." And I said, "I'm convinced that every boll is going to have anthracnose and rot, and you won't harvest any at all."

If I hadn't had some experience in that cotton with anthracnose, in South Carolina, I wouldn't have known what to answer them then. The same was true with Sea Island cotton. Sea Island cotton would not grow. We tried and tried and tried. It will not grow in our hot area out in California. Egyptian will not grow back there. Too much humidity from the rain and you get anthracnose and rot. Now, maybe they could breed one that would but the ones we had then would not.

It was apparent that some of the people gathered there had doubts about my judgment, and I didn't blame them--but later they found out that I was not wrong. They harvested nothing at all from the field. While these people were very disappointed that the crop failed, I am certain that I made a lot of lifetime friends.

I saw a good bit of Mr. Schoffelmayer through the years following and we became very good friends.

Community Participation---a High School for Shafter

Camp: You asked some time back if I had any side activities, if I was permitted to do any farming or anything. I participated

Camp: in all community activities, all branches, all things--planning and civic, in the community there at Shafter and everything else. It was a little community, it was no town, just a cross-roads and a boxcar for a railway station when I went there. But anyway after a number of years it did grow up quite a bit. Cotton was the cause of it growing faster than anything else, and we had a lot of children in the area who were finishing grammar school and weren't going on to high school because it was twenty miles into Bakersfield. It was just too far for them to go, they thought, and we thought maybe they ought to have a high school. The principal of the high school in Bakersfield, Kern County High School, said, "No, we can't give you a branch." Shafter didn't have a big enough population then, enough money, enough taxation base, to build one, so we knew it had to be a branch. And we went again, and they said, "No, no, we won't. We're not in favor of it."

So some of us got together and said, "Well, we'll see."

So we go up to see a man, Mr. Carl A. Melcher, and told him the story.

We said, "We need and want a high school in Shafter, and you need one in McFarland, perhaps, or will someday."

He lived near McFarland, two or three miles out in the country. He later became executive vice president and general manager of the Kern County Land Company, C. A. Melcher.

He said, "All right, I'll let you use my name if you can get Judge T. N. Harvey, Bakersfield, to run. Go and see him."

So we get in the car and go back to see Judge Harvey, and he says, "Okay, provided Mr. Alfred Harrell, owner and publisher of the Bakersfield Californian, will back us."

So we go over there, only two blocks away. We found Mr. Harrell very receptive.

"The two best men in the county you've named, and I've already come out editorially for another man, so I can't come out editorially for them. "But," he said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. If you fellows will have a lot of good letters written to me about these two men I'll publish every one of them on the front page of the paper."

So we went away happy and we did it, and they had oodles of letters published on the front page. We elected our two men by an overwhelming majority of votes, and we got our two

Camp: branch high schools, and that's the beginning of the branch high schools in Kern County. Now they've got not only these two but I guess twelve branch high schools in the Kern County Union High School district. They didn't want any branches; they wanted everybody to come to Bakersfield. But we folks out in the country twenty to twenty-six miles knew that it was just too far for some of those kids and they weren't going to get an education. I mention that as a sideline; just some activities that we had to help do.

State Water and Power Act Campaigns

Baum: I remember during those years you were at the Experiment Station there was a lot of agitation or interest in this state water and power plan?

Camp: That's right. Mr. C. A. Barlow, who was a congressman at one time, was one of the leaders of that water project, development for Kern County and for the San Joaquin Valley. He and Mr. Alfred Harrell, who was the owner-publisher of the Bakersfield Californian, and there were quite a number of others--Mr. Hugh Jewett did some work on it but Barlow seemed to have been the leader of the crowd then. By the way, Mr. Barlow and Mr. Harrell were two who backed me at Sacramento. Mr. Barlow went up there with me, to the legislature to get the one-variety cotton law passed. So did Mr. H. A. Jastro, General Manager of Kern County Land Company. We got it passed unanimously; we didn't have a vote against it.

Baum: What was the feeling in the valley for or against this water plan?

Camp: Well, it was a dream that people wanted and I, looking back, I'm not sure that I can accurately state the true sentiment of the people. I'm not sure that I can. I just know that all of the progressive-minded people wanted badly a project that would bring lots of water so they could develop their lands. They felt this would be of great value to the economy of the San Joaquin Valley and all of California.

Baum: Do you think that they voted for it?

Camp: Well, I don't know--.

Baum: It was defeated every time.

Camp: Oh yes. I remember. I wasn't active in that phase of it, but I was in the state. There were some very vociferous people who opposed it, and one of them--she's dead--was Mrs. Bertha Rankin. She got the Grange all worked up and apparently, I'm not sure whether all the Grange, but she was active in the Grange, and they bitterly opposed and fought it all the way through, saying that it was just for the big landed people. She was against almost everything that was progressive.

Baum: I've heard that it was defeated by the power company.

Camp: It might have been, but I wasn't in this phase of it then.

Baum: I think because it included public power development.

Invention of a Cotton Planting Machine

Baum: I don't think we covered your work with this cotton planter.

Camp: That is a rather, well, something that kind of like Topsy, it just grew. We had certain problems in planting our cotton, sometimes didn't get a good stand. We were looking for some way that would be foolproof almost; plant our cottonseed and we'd know it would come up. We'd try one thing and then another and then another, so finally, in 1925, I guess, I got J. S. Townsend, our gin expert, a good mechanic and a very good friend, to help me. I told him what I wanted and would show him the best I could draw it. He'd say, "Well, I'll go to the machine shop, the blacksmith shop, and see if I can make something like that."

We tried one thing after another, and finally came up with a press wheel, which we installed on the cotton planter to run on top of the seed immediately back of the seed spout. This presses the seed firmly into the moist soil. We proceeded to get this patented.

But in 1925, when I was working on it, most of the ideas

Camp: would come to me while I was lying abed--as did the last important item connected with the press wheel. At the urgent request of growers from all over the valley, we were giving a big demonstration on a certain day. It had been written up in all the papers all over the country, yet it wasn't perfected as we wanted it. I couldn't cover the seed the way I wanted to, and up in Chowchilla we were giving this demonstration.

Early the morning of the demonstration--we had gone up and spent the night in the hotel to be there on time--just about three or four o'clock in the morning I raised up in bed and said to Townsend, "I've got it!"

And he said, "Got what?"

I said, "I see exactly how to make this gadget to cover the seed the way we want."

And he chuckled a little and fussed at me a little, but pretty soon we got up and went out and located a blacksmith long before his regular hours. We went over to the blacksmith shop, and sure enough we made it. Put it on the planter and by nine o'clock we were ready for the crowds when they came for the demonstration. This covering device was important, but the real important thing was the wheel that I invented to press the seed firmly into moist soil. With this pressure, and ideal soil and weather conditions, the seed will germinate and come up without any covering, or without much covering. It was quite an improvement.

Then very quickly it became noised around that we really had something quite worthwhile. The John Deere tractor people sent two men out from the factory to see me. They were looking all around out at the Experiment Station, wanted to know if they could see the cotton planter attachment. I didn't let them for a while. I asked them what they wanted, and they said, "Well, we might be interested in making you a proposition," so before they left I let them see it and then I said, "What kind of a deal could you make me?"

They said, "Well, it'd be a nice cash deal, plus a royalty."

I said, "What kind of royalty? What do you mean?" I didn't know what royalty meant then!

They said, "Not less than two dollars a planter."

Camp: I said, "How many do you make?"

"Well, we now make twenty thousand cotton planters a year."

Today I guess they make more than that, I don't know, but anyway I told them that I'd already given it to the government. I hadn't given it really, I had just written a letter to the cotton breeding office in Washington asking if they thought it ought to be patented, if it was good enough. They wrote back, saying "Yes," that it was, and they would have it patented, to send them the proper detailed drawings and so on, they'd have it done.

And we did, and I wrote a bulletin about it and I also put J. S. Townsend's name along with mine on the patent I took out, as a gesture of friendship and good will; neither one of us was going to get any money out of it. He was a much older man and had a family back in South Carolina that he was away from all the time. This joint authorship made everyone happy. So that's the way it went. We supposedly got a dollar from Washington, the Patent Office, for it. I never did see the dollar, but we have a letter saying we got a dollar.

Baum: I've seen the patent. You dedicated it to the citizens of the United States. Did this go into manufacture then?

Camp: No--yes, it went into manufacture in the West. Every grower had them made and attached to his planter. In fact we don't dare take the chance of not getting a good stand of cotton if we fail to use the wheels. Many growers make them in their own shop.

This last spring Mrs. Camp and I were back in South Carolina and our new son-in-law told us that they had a new cotton planter attachment they had bought for their John Deere planter, and it was the most wonderful thing he'd ever seen, and he explained how it works. I let him tell me all about how good it is, and then I chuckled and told him that in 1926 I got a patent and had written a bulletin on that same thing. But it seemed that the patent rights had run out and John Deere--I think he said he bought it from the John Deere people--apparently are making it as an extra attachment that can be bought and put on to the planters.

But some three or four years ago another worker at an experiment station in Texas wrote up quite a story and it got into the Cotton Trade Journal, that he had invented a planter

Camp: attachment. I saw the picture of it and read all about what it was like and so on, and I wrote to the editor of the paper in Memphis and asked him, I said, "Bulletin so-and-so will show you that we have a patent on that same thing in 1926."

Ours was a steel wheel and you could make it out of anything, but it just so happens that the one we talked about was a polished steel wheel. You can make it any size you want to, depending on the soil. We put a spring on it, to press it down, but he put a rubber tire on the same wheel the way he designed it, so the only thing new--I wrote to him, and he admitted that the only thing about his was that it had rubber instead of steel. But the principle is precisely the same, and the Texas man could not get a patent. But it is a very fine invention. We wouldn't think of planting cotton seed without it.

Baum: On this patent that you had, were there any limitations on its manufacture?

Camp: No. No limitation. Anybody could manufacture it. Every company could have manufactured it, but John Deere wanted it exclusively and offered to pay for it. However, if they'd gone ahead and put it on their planters it would have cost them extra money, all the other manufacturers would do the same thing, and therefore John Deere would not have had an exclusive, no particular advantage, and they didn't do it. In giving it to the government the way we did, it turned out, and we now recognize, it was actually the wrong thing to do. Had we sold it to John Deere or somebody else, and they'd gone ahead and manufactured it, all growers in America would have had the opportunity to get the use of it immediately.

I'm told that as a result of that particular happening or circumstance, the government proceeded to pass a law making it permissible for growers, for individuals, civil service or government employees, to go ahead and patent something in their own name and get benefits from it directly. But it was too late for us. And, as I say, it would have been a nice thing today. I wouldn't have had to do any worrying about finances if I'd taken advantage of that offer. But most likely I wouldn't have had my little sweetheart here, Louise, as my wife, probably, and my whole pattern of living might have changed. As it is, my entire world knows that I am and always have been divinely happy all the time. I've never been one to look back and weep over what might have been--sour grapes, or spilled milk, so to speak.

I think it's worked out the right way. I've been completely

Camp: happy all the time, but I'm doubly happy over the fact that at long last this press wheel invention is now being made available to farmers all over the United States. We developed the improved planter for this very purpose and this is ample pay for me.

Reasons for Leaving the Experiment Station, 1928

Baum: I'd like to ask you about 1928 when you left the Station.

Camp: 1928, when they wanted me to move to Georgia--.

Baum: I know you didn't want to move. Nobody in the valley wanted you to move.

Camp: It wasn't so much that I didn't particularly want to move. I would have enjoyed going to Georgia. It's always very attractive there, also very pleasant most of the time. Actually the thought of transferring to Georgia and other southern states was a bit enticing, and I felt then as I do now, that this area needs somebody with fresh new ideas. Maybe I wasn't the one, but they still need somebody with lots of vigor and push and vision to make the changes that are necessary for a progressive, profitable agriculture in this new era. I thought of it seriously.

But when the people were so--I don't know whether to say generous or not, but anyway they said to me, "No, you must not, you cannot move," and then when we knew part of the reason for it--. Frankly, as it developed, the Washington people said when they got kind of hot talking to some people, they said, "Well,"--I'd hate for this to be in the record, but it's official--"Camp individually is too popular out here and what he should do is to write all of his messages, all of his information, down," and they had told me that. I didn't realize it had reached that proportion.

Instead of going out, advising with and showing people what to do whenever I was called, I should take care of my knitting and write bulletins entirely in my breeding and experimental plots, which hopefully would ultimately be published and then mailed out to the public. This philosophy was exactly the opposite of advice given me during the first few years in

Camp: California when the government was wanting a lot of good cotton produced for war purposes.

Well, I guess it stemmed back to the day when Mr. Cook had told me originally the first year I was hired that I was an experiment, that I was the first college boy he had hired and I was also the first southerner that he had hired who had ever worked in cotton. I didn't know how to do my job any other way than using common sense, just the way I grew up. Of course I learned new methods but I called the things just as I saw them and when asked I gave my opinion to the farmers. I could not have information and believe that it would help somebody without giving it to them if they asked me for it. I refused to close the Experiment Station to visiting farmers. And actually on that score I rebelled.

Finally it came to a showdown after all the agitation. I said, "All right, I won't go to Georgia," and then I told some of the folks at Berkeley, including Professor Crocheron. Professor Crocheron was very bitter at Washington, saying that if Camp went he'd have to hire a cotton man, that I was the cotton man not only for the Department but for the University Agricultural Extension Service also. But while this was going on-- Well, just at that time I had developed a new strain of Acala cotton, which was about ten days or two weeks earlier maturing than the strain we were then using. The seed association had accepted this new cotton enthusiastically and it was just ready for distribution to the public.

I believe that I have already told about the advisory committee which we had helping us evaluate different experiments and research projects at the Station. I considered this to be one of our biggest assets. It was definitely a working committee, and every member knew his job was to help us arrive at the best and wisest decisions. This committee had for several years watched and evaluated the different selections or strains of cotton that we were working with. They had helped me decide on the one we had proven to be best. We had made test plantings of it all over the valley for enough years to prove its worth. All of us were very enthusiastic about it.

Baum: This meant it had gone through several years of breeding and there was enough grown to have seed?

Camp: Oh yes. I had seed enough for several hundred acres that year, and that would have been enough for all of it the following year. But that wasn't the cotton, I guess, that some of Mr. Cook's boys wanted--or "Camp was too popular." I think I'd better not say any more.

Camp: But while that was going on, I had to go to the hospital because of an accident, and I was there for a month. Coming out of the cotton gin at the Station, I stooped down to pass under a trailer load of cotton. A protruding bolt cut a long slit in my scalp, requiring considerable surgery. While I was in the hospital I received a letter from top officials of the Bank of Italy, wanting me to come to see them--they didn't say what, but they wanted me to come see them in San Francisco. So it resolved itself in that manner.

All my friends, University, state, county and all, insisted that I not quit, that I call an official showdown. And had I called a showdown--. Well, subsequent to that the story is: Mr. Cook was fired and I was asked to accept the position, his position, and I didn't want it.

Baum: Mr. Cook was your superior; someone gave me the name of Carleton R. Ball.

Camp: Carleton Ball was cereals man in Washington and he was chief of that particular bureau. Cook was chief of the cotton breeding and rubber plants. So Carleton Ball was a friend out here of a lot of folks at the University. I found out that he was one of the department men who could and did co-operate wonderfully well with all reasonable people. It was just a bunch of the--.

Baum: He, Ball, wrote a book on co-operation.

Camp: Did he? I didn't know that. I'd like to see it, because he became a very good friend of mine and some of his men who worked on grain were some of my closest friends. But I didn't do some of the things--I wasn't one of the high school boys that Mr. Cook had hired.

Baum: I heard that you did things without first getting clearance, instead of waiting--you didn't send back a memo that you wanted to do this and wait till they said all right before you did it. It annoyed some of the bureaucracy.

Camp: That was the basis, and I can't operate that way. I couldn't then and I won't now. If there's something needs to be done, the ox in the ditch, the ox needs to come out. But if I had some information and a neighbor, a grower, was in distress and asked my opinion, why, I was going to give it to him, and did. I'd do the same thing today, and I think that any government worker who won't isn't worth his salt and ought to be fired. And I say that as a taxpayer today instead of as a civil service man.

Baum: Who was Dr. Karl F. Kellerman?

Camp: Kellerman was another one. He was Cook's immediate boss.

Baum: He was all set to investigate.

Camp: Oh yeah, but he was a brother-in-law of Dr. W. T. Swingle, the date man, and Swingle had asked me the year before to go into the Imperial Valley and raise money for him to set up a date experiment station in the Imperial Valley because I had successfully done it in Bakersfield and in Kern County, the Shafter Station; and I had gone to Las Cruces, New Mexico, and raised money over there from the local people for a job that needed to be done and built an experiment station there which co-operated with the government. I had done those two and I had built several other stations for the government, down at Torrey Pines and another place.

But I wasn't in sympathy with Dr. Swingle's project because he had just come back from the high hills, the Sequoias, and had wanted to get me to get enthused and we'd work up interest in getting somebody to go up into the forest and top work General Grant and General Sherman (very tall redwood trees) and so on up there and make the redwood trees continue growing taller and taller. He was that kind of a crazy galoot, and I didn't fall for it, and I wouldn't go into the Imperial Valley, even though he was in a sense a superior of mine, and ask for money to put up a station to do crazy work on things he wanted to do. I just wouldn't go. I had no authority not to; I had no reason except I had my own pride and self-respect, and I refused to go and beg for money from people to do things I didn't personally believe in. Therefore I incurred the ill will of his brother-in-law Dr. Kellerman. (Associate Chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry)

Baum: Did they investigate?

Camp: Oh yes. He came out. He didn't investigate, no; he came out and told them, several people he saw, why he wanted me to go to Georgia, but he was told an earful by a few people—everybody. But I wouldn't have stayed on with him. It had reached that point, you see. As I turned down Cook's job later; I wasn't interested. But the original Department of Agriculture had four or five people in there, Cook and Kellerman and Swingle and Scofield, to mention no others but them--they were just about the department. They just about did as they pleased, and told their superiors what they were going to do. Cook,

Camp: of course, was in charge of cotton. He'd never been south, he had never seen cotton until he was many years out of Cornell College, and he refused to hire any cotton college people or Southern people to go into cotton, so I soon came to know that he didn't know too much about the practical side of growing cotton himself. But I never said that to him.

Baum: Well, even that wouldn't be bad if he'd take the advice of the people, if he'd administer and let some cotton people re-search.

Camp: Well, I don't want to create any impression that I had any ill will or malice toward anyone. It was just a situation. Secretary of Agriculture Jardine had come out to visit the Shafter Station just about that time, and he said to them--and I think it's officially written somewhere--that he recognized it and reported to them that Shafter was the best experiment station in the United States--best-run, I believe that's the way he put it. That is on this tape but you cut it out when you come to it, please. That has no place here.

But the Bank of America, I'll say for them, the Depression was just about on us and there was no price for grapes or raisins or peaches or what-have-you, and they saw in cotton a potential savior for some of the loans they had out, and it was in that capacity, and that had no bearing on the Shafter situation, they didn't know anything about it. I insisted on the bank officials looking into the matter before I accepted their offer. They told me later they completely agreed with my stand. Anyway, they asked me if I would go, and my job was to quickly appraise a lot of their--not appraise, but make a report, a general report, of all of their distress areas, of fruit trees and vines and everything, and see if I thought cotton would grow.

So quickly I recommended that they take out many thousands of acres of vines, which they did, and in some cases some trees, and cotton was planted. For the next five years I was with them and the bank acquired--I acquired in the name of the bank--over three thousand individual ranches, from twenty acres to twenty thousand acres in size, and only two of them were cotton ranches, and those two, it so happened, were owned by a man who had some vineyards and orchards and I'm quite certain that we got the cotton farms because he had lost the others. We got them all. Not that the cotton was making any money for the people, but they just were able to keep going, whereas the fruits, there was no market and it cost so much to keep up the vines, keep the thing going, trees and so on. So I give the bank credit for having foresight enough to look for another crop.

Baum: Was there any ill will toward Herbert Hoover in the valley because of your leaving the Experiment Station?

Camp: No. I quickly, and through many of my friends, made all the folks understand that I was still going to be in the state and available, accessible, and that the finest thing that could ever happen had happened to me. That was that.

Baum: Was Hoover popular in Kern County?

Camp: Yes, he was with a lot of people. I was not interested enough in politics then to really know. I was a Democrat. [Laughing] I was his friend.

Baum: How about going into the work you did for the bank tomorrow?

Camp: All right.

FEDERAL AND STATE CO-OPERATION IN AGRICULTURE

(The following chapter was recorded on April 2, 1963, morning and afternoon sessions. It is here taken out of recording order as it relates to Mr. Camp's work as an agent of the U.S.D.A. The session was recorded after Mr. Camp had had an opportunity to look over the book by Carleton R. Ball, Federal, State and Local Administrative Relationships in Agriculture. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1938, two volumes.)

Baum: What did you find of interest in this book?

Camp: Well, he is so very careful in his way of writing. Boy, do I know what he means in a lot of it. He says that the attitude has now changed--that it all depended on personalities. As you and I said yesterday, of course that's what was involved. And the people in Washington, the Bureau of Plant Industry consisted of just a few people--Dr. W. A. Taylor was the chief and Dr. Kellerman was assistant chief, and he and Cook (in charge of cotton breeding) were intimate socially and every other way. And Swingle and Scofield, who was (or had been) in charge of most of the federal agricultural projects in all the West. They ruled or ruined. They had an attitude that they were "It." Fine people--mostly they were all wonderful to me. But I recognized, well, they said what they wanted and they expected the people in the states to accept what they recommended.

Baum: Carleton Ball uses very carefully chosen words on that.

Camp: Very, very. And only those who would really be familiar with the situation or a very close student of this kind of thing would understand some of the things he said.

What it opened to here was the California activities, saying that they had three experiment stations in California. One of them was the Shafter Station, the other one down at Torrey Pines and another one over at Yuma, Arizona. Well, it so happened that I was asked to go to both of those places

Camp: and supervise the building of the buildings at both of them because of our activities at Shafter. We built a lot of buildings cheap, of adobe, because we only had a certain amount of money. Fifteen hundred dollars was the maximum per building, so I chose adobe in order to have a fireproof office building first and then get it built cheap. I had discovered a Swiss immigrant down at Wasco who was good at it and he did all our building. I took him to the other places too. He built many of the buildings for the other stations. But we called them "monkey farms."

We called one of them "the rock pile," over near Yuma, Arizona, which was a complete absolute disgrace to the American people, imposed upon the American taxpayer. Everybody recognized that excepting O. F. Cook himself, and he got the O.K. from Kellerman and Swingle and them. They were perfectly willing to go out and dig holes and spend a while in the desert and spend the taxpayer's money for cotton investigation in places where cotton couldn't--and they never expected cotton to--grow.

Baum: Why was it called the rock pile? Was the ground hard?

Camp: Oh yes. Rock deserts--nothing but gravel. Because of that Cook chose it. He said, "We'll dig out caves and canyons and we'll plant some tropical plants and we'll maybe get some monkeys. Rubber will grow and other things will grow."

It was a disgrace. It would have been comical if it hadn't been painful financially. They were spending as much money there as we were at Shafter.

The one down at Torrey Pines, just this side of San Diego, some of the buildings are still there. That too was unfortunate because a lot of money was spent in the same way for subtropical plants, and yet this was appropriations from the cotton office that were being wasted. And we said so then, out loud. But I was on the payroll and I had to go down and help perform some of the jobs. The proof of it was that when somebody came along and made an investigation they were closed down quickly. It took several years for it to get understood sufficiently in Washington.

Baum: Does Ball tell about that?

Camp: Not in those terms. He tells that they were closed down. I should have marked it, but I didn't want to mark up a library book. The Federal Division of Western Irrigation, that's Scofield, who said before I left Washington, "You're making a

Camp: mistake sending this kid out there. It can't be done. He can't grow cotton and he can't co-operate with the University of California. Nobody ever has and he can't either." So he was in charge of the Federal Division of Western Irrigation, which maintained the Yuma field station--no, there's another one, Bard, in Imperial County on the Yuma Reclamation Project that the Bureau of Reclamation runs. Ball tells about a lot of these.

The former Division of Cotton, Rubber and Other Tropical Plants maintained three separate field stations, the Acclimatization Garden (at Torrey Pines), the cotton field station at Shafter, which was established in '21, the eighty acres which is now one hundred and sixty, I think, occupied or owned by Kern County and leased at a nominal rental by the Board of Supervisors. And then Swingle was in charge of date investigations. He's the one who wanted to go into the Sequoia Park and talked to me at length about getting somebody to go up there and have them top work those big trees, General Grant and General Sherman, those redwood trees, so as to make them continue to grow taller. Well, those kind of screwy ideas.

He also wanted another station in Imperial Valley to experiment with some of his monkey business, dates in this case. He wanted me to go down and get money from the local people and supervisors in the same way as I had in Kern County and Las Cruces, New Mexico. I told him that I couldn't sell myself on the project he wanted and I knew nothing about dates anyway, and therefore I wouldn't be the man to go because I wouldn't ask money from anybody unless I was sold on the principle. I couldn't put my heart into it, and I couldn't go. From that day forward, why of course he didn't love me. It didn't make any difference to me. I just refused then and always to do anything I am not capable of doing and am not sold on.

We called them monkey farms because it was crazy. Nothing but monkeys could... Everybody called it that, not just me. [Laughter] A lot of crazy things went on. [Reading] "In recent years much emphasis has been given to the production of only a single variety in a given community... County ordinances are passed by the board of supervisors and enforcement is by the county agricultural commission."

Now, this is a little misleading, because no ordinances are needed now. What he probably got was some notes that I had--he makes no mention of anybody here, he's merely writing facts,

Camp: not about people. But since I was the one on the job, I got a county ordinance, passed in Kern County, one in Kings County, one in Tulare County, and whether they completed it in Fresno County I'm not sure: to permit them to grow nothing but Egyptian cotton. It was a war measure. So the counties did pass those ordinances. That may be what he got mixed up in some of his notes. At the present time no county needs to pass an ordinance.

Baum: This was prior to the one-variety law then?

Camp: The county ordinances were only for the Egyptian type cotton.

Ball tells all through this that co-operation with state universities depends entirely on [airplane drowns out sound] personalities. The will to work together to get a job done. But I can say Dr. Ball in his late years, when I knew him first I was a youngster and he gave me much good advice, he did co-operate with everybody wherever he went. He created that spirit in the state and local people, a desire and a need of co-operating.

[Reading from Carleton Ball's book] "Commonly, federal activities have been located in states on the direct responsibility of some unit of the federal Department of Agriculture. Such procedure by federal agencies naturally has given rise to dissatisfaction, and occasionally to open protest. The attitudes of the two groups of agencies concerned, namely the state colleges of agriculture and the federal department, should be noted." (Later I'll come back and tell you how Shafter Station came into being.) (p. 27, Vol. I)

"Because the situation persisted, the Association"--(that's the land grant colleges)--"in 1930 appointed a "Committee on Federal-State Relations in Research" which discussed all phases of this problem in its report. It refers to the independent field stations as one of the most embarrassing features of federal-state relations in agricultural research. There were said to be fifty-one such field stations in 1928, located in twenty-four states, one state having as many as five and another four. Of these twenty-four states, fourteen reported that the research of these federal field stations in their states was not correlated with the research program of the state station, four that it was partially correlated, and six that it was fully correlated. The stations were virtually unanimous in their belief that the Department, as far as possible, should avoid establishing field stations and that when their establishment was necessary they should be administered in co-operation with the state stations." [p. 28, Vol. I] (Amen. I agree).

Camp: On page 30 it says, "Until recently, many of the Federal Bureau chiefs"--(and this is why they didn't co-operate)--"were elderly men who attained to administrative position before collaboration had been widely developed. Some of these men never developed the co-operative spirit which alone can produce just and harmonious relations with state agencies. The new group of younger men, now succeeding them, mostly have had a wider experience in co-operative action." [p. 30, Vol. I]

"The consequence is that the Department itself, apparently, has never officially adopted the principle of co-operation or recognized an obligation to eliminate competition and insure more harmonious and effective relations with the states... It now seems probable that the Federal Department soon will adopt co-operation as its official principle and working practice in all possible activities conducted within the states." [pp. 30-31, Vol. I] (Amen).

Baum: What date is this book?

Camp: 1938 is when the book was published, but he was writing it around '32 and '33. And he's got a good record of it. He's done a very fine job on relating that.

In Book II we come to page 619 first. "Co-operation in the cotton-production activities has been only sporadic and incidental. In one one minor instance has it been co-operative with the state station."

Now, if he's referring to the minor instance of the Shafter Station it's simply because he didn't know the full, real--that actual co-operation was going on in California. There was not a written record of it in Washington because people in charge of cotton in Washington did not wish the record to be there. It's hard to say but it's facts just the same.

But the co-operation--maybe I'll bring some letters, even from Dr. Crocheron, who wrote several letters to Washington to Dr. Taylor, and Frank Adams wrote one to Dr. Ball in the same vein. Crocheron said, "If Bill Camp leaves the cotton work at the Station, we at the University are going to have to hire a cotton man, because so far as we're concerned he's now California's cotton man, even though he's on the federal payroll. We work very closely together."

We did many things, for instance, that the county agents wanted tried out.

Mrs.

Camp: [Reading newspaper clipping from Mr. Camp's

Mrs.

Camp: scrapbook]: Here's an article that says the Shafter Experiment Station was a boon to farmers, and what Dr. Kellerman had to say about it when he came down on a visit.

Camp: Dr. Kellerman was assistant chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry and was a brother-in-law of Swingle, this date man. They were, with Cook, the three great nuts so far as I'm concerned.

Mrs.

Camp: "Dr. Kellerman's recent visit to the U. S. Experiment Station at Shafter and his expression of surprise and pleasure at the work that had been accomplished at the farm in so short a time fills the Kern County farmer with additional pride for the government station in our midst." This was April 30, 1925.

Camp: And only three years later he was back there trying to persuade me to resign.

Mrs.

Camp: "Well might the Kern County farmer and the residents of Shafter swell up with pride when they realize that this station is judged by those who know as one of the finest in the state." And this follows in capital letters: "Many say the finest and best managed. Mr. Camp, superintendent of the farm, is very modest in taking any extra credit for the work accomplished, claiming it is a case of good co-operation and teamwork that has made the farm what it is." (Shafter Progress, April 30, 1925)

Camp: Precisely so. I'd forgotten all about that.

About the same year this was done Mr. Wallace, who was Henry Wallace's father, was Secretary of Agriculture and he came by; George Hecke of the State Department of Agriculture brought him down and I took them over. He, in walking over the place, made the remark to them of something about the Station, and he turned to me and he said, "I don't see weeds or grass. How do you keep the station like this? This is the only one I've ever seen like it."

And before I had a chance to answer, and I don't know what I was going to say, another federal employee, not located there--he was in charge of another experiment station somewhere outside the state--said quickly to him, "Well, of course you know this is a new station and it's very easy to keep them up." So it wasn't necessary for me to answer. Well, he was a great friend of Dr. Scofield--in fact he was

Camp: working directly under Dr. Scofield.

[Reading from Carleton Ball book] "The former Division of Cotton, Rubber and Other Tropical Plants has maintained three separate field stations or acclimatization gardens in California. The Cotton Field Station near Shafter, in the San Joaquin Valley, was established in 1921. The eighty acres occupied are owned by Kern County and leased at a nominal rental by the Board of Supervisors. The Board also furnished buildings, water, power, and equipment and sells the surplus cotton." (And so on.) "The Yuma Acclimatization Garden near Bard"--(the one we called the monkey farm, the rock pile--)"in Imperial County, was within the Fort Yuma Indian Reservation and occupied about 640 acres set apart by the Office of Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior for this purpose. The Division furnished buildings and equipment and an annual budget of \$12,000, of which a good part was spent on cotton." (Cotton couldn't grow there.) "This Garden was closed in the reorganization."

"The San Diego Acclimatization Garden was located at Torrey Pines in San Diego County." (It too was called a monkey farm.) "It was established in 1923 on 174 acres of land owned by the city of San Diego and leased at a nominal charge to the Division, which furnished buildings and an annual budget of about \$10,000, not all applied to cotton experiments. This Garden also was closed." [p. 619, Vol. I] (I think these little things that I've read--).

Baum: I think this also shows the need for this kind of interview, because we don't know what is behind this unless we were in on it, and in twenty or thirty years there will be no way of finding this out.

Camp: This one at San Diego, I was asked to accompany Dr. Cook many many times and had to meet with the San Diego supervisors and city officials and agricultural commissioner and county agent and so on, and I had to go on as the young upstart from there at the other station, and I had to be the one to develop the method of asking them for the money and getting it and getting the land assigned even though I was working under Dr. Cook. We were successful in every place we tried in New Mexico and elsewhere. But I refused in Imperial Valley for Dr. Swingle, on something that I knew nothing about.

Baum: You went to San Diego?

Camp: I was working directly under Dr. Cook. At the beginning I

Camp: didn't know the possibilities--or the impossibilities of it.

Baum: And you went to New Mexico, you say?

Camp: Well, that was a different story. Yes, I went there gladly, because we worked with the New Mexico State University, the president, Dr. Kent--we worked completely together. He went with me to the Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce, the county agents and others, and we told the possibilities of establishing a cotton station there; money would be put in later and it would be operated by the U. S. Department of Agriculture in co-operation with the New Mexico State University at Las Cruces. It would be some of their own land just off the campus. So everybody was happy and I saw possibilities of doing something.

Baum: First you were to get the town to donate sufficient land, as they did at Shafter.

Camp: I had to develop a whole new setup to help get the land and some money to put up buildings and then to get going, and the how of it was left to some of us to think through and we played by ear all the way. We had no formula.

Baum: But the federal government wasn't going to pay for the land or the buildings.

Camp: No.

Baum: The community was to pay for that and then the federal government would put in funds to operate it.

Camp: That's right. And the federal government from time to time did put in money, later on--I didn't operate that, you see, I just helped in the development of it and they then hired a man to live there.

Baum: Why did the federal government not want to put in the initial investment?

Camp: Well, it was a question of budget.

Baum: It wasn't an effort to insist that the community co-operate, then.

Camp: Both, but it was primarily from Washington's standpoint. I'd have to say now, knowing what I do, that they didn't have the funds, and they wanted to come in and do some cotton breeding and investigations. We got the money, we got the co-operation of the whole community, and first of all the University and

Camp: the president of the University and the director of Extension. All co-operated completely in helping to develop it.

On page 654, in potatoes: "Production. In California, the co-operation has been very limited. In 1923 and 1924 the Station Division of Truck Crops began varietal tests of potatoes in different sections of the state. The tests in Los Angeles County were in co-operation with the Extension Service, and those in Kern County in co-operation with the Federal Bureau of Plant Industry at its Cotton Field Station at Shafter."

What was done there--we had no money on the Station to do potato work. It was all cotton at that time. It's mostly cotton now. But I wanted to do some work on potato fertilization. Potatoes had never been fertilized in that county before, so I got the county agent to come out, Larry Taylor, L. W. Taylor, and he and I conducted field tests of different fertilizers in different amounts, and even though we furnished the fertilizer and we were wanting to do it, because it was a cotton station we did it in his name. And he did follow it. But that's how closely he and I co-operated on everything. He was very helpful to us on all the cotton experiments and everything else.

(It talks about citrus work that the government did, at the citrus experiment station at Riverside.) "(The director) regards the relation as restricted to the furnishing of certain facilities and services by the station." [p. 665, Vol. 110] (In other words, at that time this shows very plainly that the director of the citrus experiment station did not appreciate the fact that the federal government came in and got office space and then did their own work and didn't co-operate at all. And I don't blame him.)

Here's another on the citrus experiment station, working with alkali, plant investigation: "The federal workers were given office and laboratory facilities at the station but apparently no state worker took part in the study." [p. 666] That was under Dr. Scofield.

Talking about co-operation: "In 1907, a tract of 20 acres near Indio, in the Coachella Valley of Southern California, was deeded to the Department and became the U. S. Experiment Date Garden. The studies were wholly non-co-operative with official state agencies." [p. 676, Vol. II] (It was from that station that Swingle wanted me to go to the Imperial Valley and get money and land and put up another station for him to boondoggle with.)

Camp: I think you'll get the idea that Dr. Ball is telling us that there really was very little co-operation.

"Federal-state co-operation has varied widely with the Federal agencies involved. Within the Bureau of Plant Industry the widest possible extremes, from virtually complete co-operation with state agencies to almost complete non-co-operation, have existed through the past thirty to forty years. Recent organizations, however, are greatly increasing the scope of co-operation. The Bureau of Entomology in general has been a nonco-operative bureau, especially in its research units." (p. 685) And "Of all Plant Industry units having extensive field activities, the Division of Cereal Crops and Diseases"--that's Dr. Ball--"has been the most consistently co-operative with the states and with other federal units over the longest period of years." [p. 686]

Well, that was widely known by everybody, that Dr. Ball's whole division co-operated with the states in every state he went into. He was head of the cereals division in the Bureau of Plant Industry. That's the title that I remember him by.

"Still other Divisions, such as Fruit Diseases, Horticulture and Pomology, Sugar Plants, Vegetable and Forage Crop Diseases, and Western Irrigation Agriculture, have co-operated fully with state agencies in a few instances, but have conducted most of their work independently." [p. 686]

Western Irrigation Agriculture was Dr. Scofield. He's the one who told me I couldn't co-operate with the University of California. I shan't forget that.

"The Divisions of a fourth group, including Biophysical Investigations, Cotton, Rubber, and Other Tropical Plants, Crop Physiology and Plant Breeding, and Egyptian Cotton Breeding, were almost entirely non-co-operative." Cook. "It probably is not merely a coincidence that all of them have been merged into other units of the Bureau." [p. 687] (That's a masterful sentence.)

Now I'll go back. The Shafter Experiment Station came into being in an atmosphere that was very very fine, with co-operative spirit on the part of every agency of the University of California that I know about. We visited back and forth. We were one and the same in our work, frankly; wherever they wanted me in a meeting or a demonstration or whenever I wanted some of them, we always were there and there was no thought of who, what, why, where or anything. It was teamwork. And

Camp: some thought that I was just running around making these experiments and while they were turning out well, most of them, it seemed very obvious to some of us that if we had our experiments controlled, concentrated where we could better control the hourly, weekly, monthly operations, that we could then swear by the results a little more than where we had to run by hit and miss, and farmers do some of the work and maybe it wouldn't be done exactly as we wanted. So that was the why of the Station, first, and how to go about it, I talked with a lot of people, locally first, county agents, the agricultural commissioners and county supervisors and local Chamber of Commerce.

I remember so well one day sitting in on one of the annual tours that Crocheron carried his county agents and farmers up and down the state on. We were in McFarland; he and I were standing kind of on a fence where they were marketing some livestock and we got into a conversation about cotton and I told him about some of the ideas and some of the other people said, "Well, well, well, maybe there ought to be an experiment station for this." I approached it from the standpoint that maybe the University ought to have one. But the upshot of our conversation was that he said, "I agree with it thoroughly. If you want me to, if you think it appropriate, I'll write a letter to your people in Washington suggesting that it be done." Well, it was all right with me.

I came on up here and met with him and the dean and others, and they took up the idea, helped develop it, and the University wrote to Washington suggesting that Washington ought to have a cotton experiment station in California, at any place they thought appropriate in the San Joaquin Valley.

Well, when that letter and another one or two or three hit Washington from that kind of source, they were bowled over. They said you couldn't co-operate with California, and here was California inviting the U. S. Department of Agriculture to build a station. This was to them unheard of. But really there was nothing mysterious about it. And that's why it really was needed.

Mrs.

Camp: The population of the Shafter area was set at four thousand-- this was October 1, 1925--and the Experiment Station proved a great boon to the cotton industry and the valley farmers. This was after it really got started. The Pasadena Station moved here. No, not a station, merely one or two U.S.D.A. men working in southern California.

Camp: I invited them to come up and do their horticultural work, their rose work at the Shafter Station.

Baum: Do they grow well in the Shafter area?

Camp: Yes, and as a result of this probably, today roses are propagated and grown more in the Wasco-Shafter-McFarland area than anywhere else. Armstrong Nurseries of Los Angeles, Aubrey Armstrong is the head of it now, has bought a big acreage, altogether now I guess maybe a section of land (640 acres), and has got one of their big headquarters in the Wasco area for rose propagation. Many other rose growers have followed until now the area is known all over the USA as the "Rose Capitol of the World."

Baum: Now, Frank Adams^{*} thought that co-operation was very good all the time and I expect it was within the units he was in co-operation with.

Camp: Perfect with all of them. But Frank Adams, I told you about him bringing a crowd down one night--I met him in Merced late at night and we went on down the next day. No man has ever been more helpful or inspired a youngster more than his statement to me, holding onto my hand, complimenting me on a bulletin I'd written, and I didn't know that Washington had sent him the manuscript to read before it was published. We had that kind of... And two of his men had been working with me, C. F. Dunshee and Sam Beckett. They were assigned anything they wanted on the Station.

Mrs.

Camp: Right here in the same article it says you had sixty-seven kinds of roses planted on the Shafter Station. (October 1925 Shafter Progress)

Baum: That's something I didn't realize you had.

Camp: I wasn't going to mention it, but the rose industry down there now is big, and Armstrong told me some months ago that they look on it as the headquarters now of the rosegrowing industry. I put up two or three buildings on the Shafter Station for their experimental work. Now they plant the cuttings directly outside in the field.

* Adams, Frank, "University of California, on Irrigation, Reclamation and Water Administration," typed transcript of a tape-recorded interview, University of California General Library Regional Cultural History Project, (Berkeley, 1959) pp 464. In Bancroft Library.

Baum: That's pretty hot there, isn't it?

Camp: Yes, but these roses do wonderfully well. You go by there this summer and you'll see thousands of acres of different varieties and colors of roses.

AGRICULTURAL APPRAISER AND LAND MANAGER FOR THE BANK OF
AMERICA, 1928-1933
(July 17, 1962 Interview)

Trying to Save Farms From Foreclosure, or to Operate Lands
Taken Over by the Bank

Baum: Last time we ended with you leaving the Experiment Station, having been offered a position with the then Bank of Italy.* What were your duties?

Camp: Well, the original concept was that I would make a survey of all the properties, areas, and particularly the areas in which they had a lot of real estate loans, the farmer prices were so low on tree fruits and grapes, and they wondered if some of the vines and trees should be pulled out and some other crop put in, and the reason they were interested in me, in my services, was my experience with cotton. So I did make a survey of all of their properties in and out of the different areas of the valley and made certain recommendations. As a result, some areas, Yettum particularly I remember, near Orosi, and several others, but thousands of acres of vines themselves were sick, so that was pulled out and ultimately planted into cotton and vegetable crops.

Baum: Did these lands belong to the bank or were these lands that they had loans on?

Camp: Both. Lands that they owned, a small amount at that time, first, but great acreages and many hundreds, yes, thousands of ranches that they had loans on. I think I should say here that a big majority of the bad loans we acquired with the numerous county banks which Bank of Italy bought during this period. They were wondering what the farmer was going to be able to do. Their idea was to help the farm owners--hoping they could get something quickly, a profitable crop, that would permit the farmer to stay on. The bank didn't want the land at all, but in too many cases the farmer just wished to move off and give them the land and that was it. I hope never to witness this type tragedy again.

*The Bank of Italy and the Bank of America of California were merged in September, 1930.

Baum: The farmers were just so discouraged they didn't want to try.

Camp: That's right. And there were no prices for some of those crops.

Baum: You took over this job in December, 1928? Or was it 1929?

Camp: 1928, the latter part of November in 1928. You want me to say what I did first? I was with them just exactly five years, but my duties, as I told you, to start with, was that, and then they quickly had farmers coming in to ask them what they would do and should do and could do, and so I had to make recommendations then on individual farms, appraising lands for them. It wasn't many months into the next year, why, we had acquired so many farms, the farmers just moved off so something had to be done with them. At this juncture the bank had me take over as manager of California Lands Inc., with headquarters there in Fresno.

We had to blaze a new trail and quickly decide what to do. Some of the marginal and poorer farms we completely abandoned, others we got into shape and farmed them as they were or pulled out the vines and trees and put in other crops, cotton being one of them. Others we leased to farmers whom we could get to take over and operate them themselves.

Baum: California Lands, Incorporated. This was the land that the bank owned.

Camp: That's right. It was just a name of an operating company for the bank. During my five years with them, under my supervision the bank had to acquire one way or another--mostly by the farmers not wanting to stay, just said they were discouraged and wanted to give up--acquired a little over three thousand individual ranches ranging in size from twenty acres to twenty thousand acres, the largest being mostly rangelands. It added up to quite a lot of vineyards and orchards and other lands.

Baum: Was there anything the bank could do to prevent the farmer from moving off?

Camp: Well, we tried awfully hard to induce them wherever there was a possibility and particularly where the man was a good farmer, to induce him to stay on, but there were other cases where the farmer just was too discouraged; he didn't want to stay. And there were a few cases where the farmer was not a good farmer and completely lost out and had no chance to recoup, he'd gotten too far in debt. But that was the exception rather than the rule. The bank was not wanting the farmers to leave the land.

Baum: Were any of these lands in irrigation districts?

Camp: Yes, most all the grape lands were in irrigation districts and also most of the peaches--much of it was in the Fresno irrigation district and also the Selma irrigation district--I've forgotten the names of some of those irrigation districts. Tulare also had irrigation districts in some areas. So did Merced County and all other counties in northern San Joaquin. In the Madera area, why, there were some irrigation district lands up there, but a lot of that was from deep wells.

Baum: It was my understanding of the irrigation district law that its taxes or assessments took precedence over bank loans, so the bank would either have to pay the irrigation districts' assessments or the land would revert to the district. Is that correct?

Camp: That is correct if my memory serves me right.

Baum: Did the bank choose to hold on to the land or let some of it go to the districts?

Camp: Most of it in the San Joaquin Valley they hold on to. There was some they let go back to the irrigation district in areas that was very marginal land, and they didn't see any hope of having any crop at that time that would pay out. Later I understand most of these delinquents were repossessed by the bank.

Cotton Stabilization Corporation

Baum: Well, cotton was in excess, wasn't it?

Camp: A surplus of cotton? Well, there was a big surplus of cotton coming along about 1932--'31--'32.

Baum: The Cotton Stabilization Corporation was established in 1930, to buy the surplus cotton?

Camp: That's right, and at a very low price too, wasn't it? Yes. That was almost as bad as back in the 1914-1915 period I remember when I was in college. They had a national slogan,

- Camp: "Buy a bale of cotton, ten cents." The price had gone to .07, and we cotton growers were, I guess, desperate, although as I have previously said, my own family it didn't hurt a lot because we never had enough cotton to give us much money anyhow, so if we had vegetables and things to eat, why, we were all right, at least we didn't suffer for food. But it was a desperate situation across the Cotton Belt.
- Baum: What did the bank officials think of the Cotton Stabilization Corporation? That was Hoover's plan.
- Camp: That was Hoover's plan and I was not a part of that, and I'm not qualified to pass on just what the bank thought at that time. I can only give you what they thought, or what was done, beginning with the Triple A farm program in '33, but I had no part of the other as an official.

Harvey Kilburn, Superintendent of Hoover Farm

- Baum: I saw your name linked with Harvey Kilburn.
- Camp: Well, in this way: I don't know where you saw it, but anyway, in 1920 Ralph T. Merritt, who was comptroller, I believe, at the University of California, and Parker Frisselle, who was superintendent down at Kearney vineyard, the University farm at Fresno--I think I've stated this previously to you. We had had some pretty good cotton and they were interested in growing some of it and they interested Herbert Hoover in buying a farm--he and Julius Barnes, from Duluth, Minnesota. Well, I, being a good friend of Mr. Jastro, manager of the Kern County Land Company, Mr. Merritt and they asked me where I thought the best place to grow a lot of cotton successfully, profitably, (was) and I told them that the most ideal place to grow good cotton was somewhere on the good land in Kern County, that maybe we could buy from Kern County Land Company. So, at their suggestion, I interviewed Mr. Jastro and he agreed, that he would sell anything and as much as the group wanted.

So, during the early part of the year we selected thirteen hundred acres, near Wasco--one hundred acres of it was to have been mine; I was to quit my job and manage the operation, and plant all to cotton. However, the cotton price went down so drastically that they decided to switch to a fruit farm. When

Camp: they decided to go into fruit instead of cotton I decided to stay with my government job. I didn't want to get into fruit; I hadn't had that experience yet. So they hired Harvey Kilburn, who was a University of California graduate and was at that time doing some soils work, I believe, survey work, irrigation district or something, in Kern County, and they hired him as superintendent of the Hoover Farm. And then he and I were associated in a number of community projects. I showed him how to grow cotton and had lots of demonstrations on the farm, made some cotton selections on that farm and also grew some nice cotton.

Shortly after I joined the bank, it was agreed we needed additional manpower. Kilburn had previously applied for a job and since he was available he was hired. Harvey Kilburn. He was manager or superintendent of the farms in part of Tulare County; he wasn't in the same overall type work we were doing--he wasn't making surveys, as I had to, to determine what to plant or what to do with the properties. He didn't remain with the bank very long.

Baum: Julius Barnes still was with Hoover, wasn't he?

Camp: I really don't know. I saw him in Washington in 1953 or '54.

Baum: What happened to the Hoover Farm?

Camp: It was still going. Herbert Hoover's son Allen continued to run it, and he hired another manager, a Mr. Sims, and then they hired another one later, in fact four or five all told. Apparently they never made much money on it. Kilburn was a very expensive operator, I guess, so they said.

My first job with the Bank of Italy, (later name changed to Bank of America) about eleven o'clock one night Mr. A. W. Hendrick, vice president and manager of the Mortgage and Loan Department of the Bank of Italy, at his home (I spent three successive evenings there before I agreed to join the bank) said, "Now that you're going with us, what do you know about the Hoover Farm? What can you tell us?"

And I said, "Well, I selected the site of some of the best land in California, I think, and where the nicest farms should be."

And he said, "Well, you might be surprised. They've asked us for a loan"--I've forgotten the amount. It seems to me like it was something--\$400,000--I've forgotten. But

Camp: whatever it was I quickly calculated in my own mind and I said, "Well, that's the price we paid for it when I bought it, selected it for them, and if they haven't been able to pay any of that initial price down," I said, "unless they get another kind of management I certainly wouldn't lend them the money." And they didn't, and they renewed their loan with another Los Angeles bank.

Subsequently Allen Hoover, who was managing it--it was in his name, it seemed, then, and just what part his father was playing in it I do not know--but they subsequently sold the farm, broke it up and sold it in smaller tracts to the neighbors.

Baum: Was that farm also called Poso Land and Products Company?

Camp: That's right. That's the name that Parker Frisselle and Ralph Merritt gave to it. Harvey Kilburn later went into produce business on his own and I believe that he passed away some years ago.

Carl Wente

Baum: Who was Carl Wente?

Camp: Carl Wente is a very dear friend of mine, then and now. He and Mr. Hendrick were the ones who asked me to go with the bank, leave the government, and I liked the two of them, my three-days' visit with them before we decided that I should quit my other job. But anyway, from that moment on Mr. Carl Wente and I have been close friends. He was assistant to Mr. Hendrick, then in charge of all the real estate loans and the Mortgage Department, also in charge of all land holdings all over the state of California. Subsequently Carl Wente became president of the Bank of America, and I believe he retired once, after Giannini Jr. died, the son of the founder, A. P. Giannini, and they called him back and made him president again for a five-year period. He is now retired again. But I believe he's chairman of the executive committee today of the Bank of America. A very fine banker and a fine American. Always a great friend of the farmers.

Baum: Wasn't he on some public relations committee later?

Camp: Oh, he's been on many committees, but I believe that he is serving, they drafted him some two or three years ago, to serve as chairman of the public relations organization of farmers, in order to sell to the world the idea that farmers are important folks, and to try to help with the labor relations to keep the farmers from having strikes and so on.

Baum: Was this public relations work through the Bank of America?

Camp: No. He's doing that as a private citizen. As I say, he's retired from the bank, even though he's a director of the bank, but he has no daily duties. Even so, he is still one of the most influential directors.

Baum: I always imagined it would be hard to get farmers together for something like that.

Camp: Well, they have done a remarkable job in the past two or three years, with this idea. Farmers have had very poor public relations and Carl Wente's idea, and the group working with him, is to give the true picture of agriculture and farmers to the public, through radio and press and television and in every way possible. Incidentally, that's been my own activity for the past many years, in fact all my life I've tried to convince folks in the cities and elsewhere, who weren't farmers, that farmers didn't have horns and they weren't demanding government subsidies to have them as the kept child of our American economy.

Cotton Co-ops

Baum: What was the Cotton Co-operative Association?

Camp: The California Cotton Co-operative Association.

Baum: You were elected a director of the California Cotton Growers Association. Is that the same?

Camp: Well, yes and no. Originally we organized a cotton co-op in Kern County, which I think I've mentioned earlier in this story, and Mr. Arthur Swain was the manager of that.

Baum: What was that for, marketing?

Camp: Solely for marketing the cotton. But that was on a small scale. And then later a cotton co-op with headquarters in Delano with a Mr. Green as president was organized, and floundered for a year or so and then along about 1929 or '30, I've forgotten the year, it was thought that there ought to be a re-organization and a real effort made to have an honest-to-goodness cotton marketing co-op. We did; several of us got together and did organize such a group, and we elected Mr. C. C. Selden as manager. I was chairman of the nominating committee. Mr. Selden had been and was then the western manager of McFadden Brothers Cotton Company, representative in the West and very friendly to all California. He'd been very helpful in all the California cotton efforts.

We selected him as the manager of the cotton co-op; he did a good job, and it grew. He died, and that same co-op has now moved--or did while he was there--to Bakersfield, and today they call it "Cal-Cot," for California Cotton Co-operative Association. Mr. Russell Kennedy is the general manager. They market an awful lot, about a third maybe; twenty-five to thirty-five per cent of California's cotton is marketed through that group.

Baum: I think some of the other marketing co-ops have a very strong control over their members; they can't sell outside the co-op and their acreage is already promised to the co-op. Is this true of the cotton co-op?

Camp: I presume it is, though I do not know all the details now. Quite a number of years ago, after our own personal cotton acreage increased a bit, we had enough volume that we could sell it ourselves directly to the mills. We no longer market through the cotton co-op. But it's doing a good job. We didn't go out of it for any reason other than we just have a lot of crops and we have a marketing division, and we take care of our own.

Baum: You didn't need their services?

Camp: Well, maybe we did but we didn't think we did, and we're getting along all right. But they're doing a good job too.

Baum: When you were elected a director-at-large in 1930, was this as manager of the California Lands, Inc.? Or did you have your own farming effort on the side?

Camp: Well, no, I wasn't farming on the side at all. I had a farm, but I wasn't farming, and I wouldn't say that I was elected a director of the cotton co-op because I was manager of the

Camp: California Lands but rather because of my past experience with the cotton. I was manager of California Lands, headquarters at Fresno.

Baum: Who was Mr. C. O. Moser?

Camp: C. O. Moser was the vice-president of the American Cotton Growers Association, headquarters in Dallas or Memphis, I've forgotten which. I believe it was Dallas; I'm not sure. But he was a rather ambitious sort of an individual and he too had heard a lot about cotton in California and he made a trip or two out and evidently saw that it might become important nationally, and he was ambitious for cotton growers out here to organize and become a part of the American Cotton Co-op, of which he was the manager. He was looking at it purely from the standpoint of his own organization.

Baum: Did you join?

Camp: No. Well, it was a matter of each state joining and I'm not sure if the California Co-op joined. I rather doubt it. Anyway, Mr. Moser's group folded before too long.

Contract to Furnish Safeway Stores with Produce

Camp: Incidentally, aside from cotton marketing, the bank and California Lands had other marketing problems. Safeway Stores decided to set up a produce department in California to buy for all of the Safeway Stores all over America, and they had a Mr. Price, who came out and headed it up, and while manager of California Lands, I helped them organize some of the local units. I made a contract with them for bank--or for California Lands, a subsidiary of the bank--that they had to buy fruit and vegetables and produce from us, if we had it. Which is a rather unique situation.

They thought it was a fine opportunity for them to get all the volume that they wanted easily, without having to have men running around all over the country buying here and there.

Baum: You agreed to be able to furnish them.

Camp: No, we agreed that we would have a lot of produce and fruit, and we didn't know how much they would want so we were happy to have an opportunity to have an outlet. We also thought it was a very fine arrangement from our standpoint. However, they grew very rapidly and wanted a lot of varied products that we didn't have and of course they went outside to buy and we didn't try to hold them. Actually, I'm not sure it was good for either side but we thought so at the time.

Baum: Of course Safeway doesn't buy cotton but they've worked quite closely with California farmers.

Camp: Yes, and they've done a good job in some cases.

Baum: Mr. Bancroft* told about some dried fruit committee they had, that they worked with the farmers on trying to promote more use of dried fruits.

Camp: Fine, fine, very fine.

California Raisin Committee

Camp: Well, while I was with the California Lands there, headquarters in Fresno, I had to serve--because of the nature of things we had lots and lots of ranches, vineyards and orchards--I had to serve on a lot of committees. One of them was the California Raisin Committee, and they elected me secretary of the Committee and then later I had to act as chairman of the Committee (when Mr. Ray Humphrey, chairman, got sick) for the whole valley-wide raisin association. Raisins were very cheap then. Grape growers, with the help of University specialists, bankers and others, also had to do the same thing for fresh grapes, they had quite an organization. Desperately growers were trying to find markets and there weren't many markets then.

Baum: Speaking of raisins, I noticed Wylie Giffen's name mentioned as a cotton grower; I always thought of him as a raisin grower.

* Bancroft, Philip, "Politics, Farming, and the Progressive Party in California," typed transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted by Willa K. Baum, University of California General Library Regional Cultural History Project, (Berkeley, 1962). In Bancroft Library.

Camp: Wylie Giffen was president of the raisin growers' association and he and some of us became pretty well acquainted just then, and he saw what cotton was doing for some individuals and after a lot of conferences he decided that he would go to Kern County and buy some land and plant a lot of cotton, hoping to make some money. And he did, and then after he had been in it for a little while he decided to plant a lot of that same land to vineyards, again, in Kern County, so it was the same story over. Well, he sold out that after a few years, came back to Fresno, and went over on the west side and bought a lot of cotton land and other crops. Russell Giffen is his son, who now farms a lot of cotton and grain.

New Deal AAA Cotton Program Takes Camp to Washington, D.C.

Baum: Did cotton remain a better crop than grapes? By 1932 the Cotton Stabilization Corporation had gone broke.

Camp: Yes, and chaos prevailed everywhere. Cotton growers were broke too--but still not as broke as grape people!

Immediately after President Roosevelt was inaugurated in 1938 he invited Mr. Cully A. Cobb, Atlanta, Georgia, to come to Washington to head up a task force to recommend an emergency program for cotton. This proved to be a very fortunate and wise choice. Probably no other man in America could have so quickly brought the interested people together. Mr. Cobb was not only eminently qualified as a cotton expert, but his work in the agricultural field made him acquainted with all the agricultural leaders in all the cotton states--as well as a broad acquaintance in all other states.

During this same period the Agricultural Adjustment Administration was organized with Mr. George Peek as administrator. Mr. Cobb was named chief of the Cotton Division. (Later under a reorganization he was made director of all Triple A programs in all the southern states and chief of cotton programs everywhere).

I shall not try to recite details but Mr. Cobb in short brought all cotton leaders together with a group of senators and congressmen from the cotton states and after many weeks of day and night work a recommended program emerged. After

Camp: much fussing and fuming a program was adopted for the 1933 crop that had already been planted.

Senator Cotton Ed Smith of South Carolina was chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and he was very co-operative. Senator Bankhead of Alabama was a member of this committee. He worked closely with Mr. Cobb and his staff. The Cotton Program that emerged for 1934 was called the "Bankhead Cotton Bill."

With a number of amendments this type program operated until about 1937. By that time they had other rules and regulations for a Cotton Program for the subsequent years. Mr. C. A. Cobb, Cully A. Cobb, of Atlanta, Georgia, was the director of the Cotton Program from the beginning. Dr. Howard L. Tolley, head of the Giannini Foundation of the University of California, went to Washington immediately as one of the officials of the Triple A. Dr. Tolley got in touch with me right away and urged that I come to Washington to help head up the Cotton Program. He and I had seen much of each other while serving on several committees during 1931 and 1932 in California. He insisted that I had experience in cotton in the West under irrigation as well as in the East and the problem had to be handled all across. So after many conferences and so on, why, I went to Washington and for the first time met Cully A. Cobb. We liked each other immediately so I decided to come back to California and clean up my things with California Lands and go back, and I did.

Baum: Was that why you went to Washington?

Camp: Well, yes, that's why I went to Washington that time.

Baum: I guess in a newspaper clipping I got the idea that you'd gone there to get higher acreage allotments for the cotton co-operative.

Camp: Well, it was all in the same process. They urged me to go back and intercede for California. You see, we didn't have a very great acreage nor a lot of history, and all the farm programs were based on past history of that crop, so it hit a lot of people in California rather hard at first because the bank had been promoting cotton and others had been promoting cotton as a better crop than some of these others, so many of them just had a one-year history of cotton.

Baum: The government history went back five years?

Camp: Went back for five years; in some cases the grower was permitted to use ten years. So it placed cotton growers in the irrigated West in a very awkward position, so they asked me to go back and explain the situation because these growers who had then gone into cotton had had to buy cotton machinery and equipment, and it was a hard blow, again. They would really have a depression if they had to throw that machinery away and not have any history. So it was all worked out to the satisfaction of everybody, and I decided to stay with them in Washington.

Baum: I read that you got the acreage rental raised from eleven dollars to eighteen dollars.

Camp: I've forgotten those details, but I can assure you that I did not argue for anything that I did not think was fair.

Baum: It seemed to me that was very high because I think that the nation as a whole was getting between seven and twenty dollars. Eighteen dollars would have been near the top.

Camp: Well, of course it was all based on per acre yield; you had so many acres and then that was based on the history of that acre yield, so all you had to do is to look back at the records of the cotton production in whatever state it was--in this case California--and it was put down historically as nearly correctly as they knew how. And all areas accepted that because they tried to do an honest job.

Baum: Was there a feeling of competition with cotton growers in other states, or was there a feeling that you were all in the same boat?

Camp: You mean during that Depression?

Baum: 1928-33, I'm thinking of, before the AAA.

Camp: Well, during that time there wasn't much feeling of competition with the others because you were free to plant what you wanted to then, but cotton being so new out here it didn't have a great acreage, and the southerners hadn't yet looked upon it as a threat to their empire. Also all of the cotton states knew cotton came west as a war measure. But subsequently, some years later, they saw this threat and the cotton growers in the South, many of them, tried to have the program so set up and have a ten-year history instead of a three-year history or something--in other words, so they'd have the advantage.

Camp: Some of us thought that was unfair and tried to argue for a more reasonable and more up-to-date history. I told them if they wanted to go back far enough they could bring my grandfather into it and some of us in the West, in Texas and in Oklahoma and so on, wouldn't have any history at all.

New Deal Farm Credit Regulations

Baum: Right when Roosevelt came in he enacted a number of farm credit regulations to assist the farmers in getting loans and prevent foreclosure. Did that have any effect on your work with the bank?

Camp: Yes, slightly. He appointed Henry Morgenthau, his secretary--governor of the Farm Credit Administration. Later he was Secretary of the Treasury. He came out and went all through the country here. I was with the bank and we had some meetings, and they did set up some very liberal loan regulations so that many of the farmers who still were living on the farm were able to go to the government and get some liberal loans, and it helped them and in many cases I'm sure the bank was very happy to have it transferred over to them. They'd get paid off.

Baum: They'd get paid off at less than the note value, wouldn't they?

Camp: I don't want to comment on that because I think it depended on the individual ranch, the appraisal and the actual loan that was on the farm. I'm sure in some cases yes; in some cases it wouldn't be because the value was there already. There was no, to my knowledge, actual set formula that they went by that applied; the loan and what happened depended upon the individual case.

Baum: This was for farmers who were still on their farms and hadn't been foreclosed on yet. Did any of those that had already left take advantage of this credit and come back?

Camp: Yes. Some of them to the same farm, but probably more of them took advantage of the credit to purchase a farm that they might want somewhere else, maybe in some other community and commodity too.

Baum: They didn't have to use this buying ability on their own farm?

Camp: They could apply to the Farm Credit Administration and get a loan to buy a farm. Many of them did.

Baum: Did that take a lot of farms out of the hands of California Land?

Camp: Yes. The policy of California Lands and the bank was to sell them just as fast as possible, and they did. They weren't wanting to hold the farms; they weren't trying to build up an empire of farms at all. Strictly bankers. Many, yes, most of the farms that they had to acquire came about because of banks that they had bought or merged and so on, and some of those country banks had some pretty heavy loans.

Baum: You were already out of the bank when the Municipal Bankruptcy Act came in? That was in 1934.

Camp: Yes, I was out then.

Baum: You don't know what the bank officials thought of that?

Camp: No, I don't.

Baum: It prevented foreclosures; at least the farmer could pay rent.

Camp: Yes. I'm not familiar with what happened on that.

Comments on Rexford Tugwell and Resettlement Administration

Baum: Did you have anything to do with the Resettlement Administration?

Camp: You mean the one that Rexford Tugwell was head of? If that wasn't running over there I might tell you something. Well, I knew a lot of the people in the Resettlement Administration. They had a lot of good men in that in places. Oh, in the meantime, the first year after I got to Washington the Land Use Department tried to get me to transfer over to that and take charge of all the Southeast, advising what land the government should buy, take out of production, and what should be grown here,

Camp: there, and everywhere else. But I chose to stay on with the Cotton Program because I didn't want to stay in Washington long; I wanted to get back out here.

But a lot of the men who went in the Resettlement Administration later, in my judgment, succumbed to the influence or spell that Tugwell and Mrs. Roosevelt seemed to have placed over a lot of them, and their judgment was different to what it had been before. They made several attempts across America, and one of them, a man who was a good friend of mine and had been a fine operator, but they were willing to set up--wanted to set up and did, kind of, communal farms like Russia recommends, and a lot of us urged against it, that it should never be attempted, and so on, but they went ahead in some cases and did it. None of them worked out. It was a complete flop in every sense, and that type of thinking spoiled a lot of good men. I don't know what happened, but Tugwell had a lot of influence. He and Mordecai Ezekiel, who was an economist in the Department and worked with him a lot.

Baum: Yes, I think that whole program collapsed.

Camp: It was a complete boondoggling from begin to finish and should never have been. One of the saddest things to me was, as I say, that a lot of very fine sound-thinking men and women went into that organization and inside of a very short time their judgment was not the same at all again. Don't ask me why, but I will say that finally, ultimately, the last act of Brother Tugwell in the Department of Agriculture was a scheme he had hatched up--another scheme, different from the resettlement thing but part of it, but it was to be something very spectacular, sensational, and he was trying to use a lot of good senators and congressmen to promote his program. He hadn't told them all that was going to happen and why, but some of us around had access, came across some of his schemes, and quickly alerted some of the senators who were going to make speeches for it.

Being specific, one morning a man in Washington, Sam Bledsoe, in charge of news or something in the Department, came to me. I was holding a meeting with a lot of people from out-of-town, different states.

He called me out and we immediately went to my office and he said, "Come on, close the door," and he said, "Bill--."

I said, "What do you want?"

Camp: He said, "You can raise more hell in ten minutes than anybody else around here in a month, and I just want to tell you what's about to happen."

So he proceeded; just the two of us there. Tugwell was getting Senator Joe Robinson. Well, Pat Harrison of Mississippi and Joe Robinson from Arkansas were to make major speeches for him in Arkansas on a certain date just three or four days from then--I've forgotten how many, but just that week, and he said, "This is what it's for, to promote this new scheme."

And it was something that to us seemed pretty awful, and so, quickly the senators were apprised of what they were going to be used for. They didn't understand; they didn't know about it. I mean, fundamentally what he was going to try to do. But anyway, instead of going to make the speech, they went to President Roosevelt, and the President then called in Brother Tugwell and they had quite a session, and instead of going to Arkansas, as he was going to, the next morning or two mornings after that, there were headlines in the newspaper that he had been fired.

In order to get the full story, the secretary who took the notes at the President's desk had taken her notebook home with her that night, and there was quite a hassle to find that so they could announce it to the papers and so on, the true facts. So I was in on a lot of things that I have no records of.

Baum: Do you remember what the scheme was?

Camp: No, the detail of it I frankly don't; it had an eighty year payoff tag on it. But it was so cockeyed that it never did go into effect. [Laughing] I think Mr. Cobb had an inkling of the proposed project but he was away from Washington, D.C. this day. I didn't know that I had that kind of a reputation there. This was subsequent to Jerome Frank and Lee Pressman and that whole crowd being fired.

Baum: You haven't told me that; I'm going to save it for next time.

Camp: But that's exactly the way it happened. There are no records anywhere, so far as I know, that I can get hold of to substantiate what I'm telling you. Except Sam Bledsoe, who's still living. He has a public relations business in Washington, D.C. now, he and someone else.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE COTTON PROGRAM, AAA,
DECEMBER 1933-DECEMBER 1936
(July 18, 1962 Interview)

Regional Representative for Irrigated Cotton Areas;
Headquarters in Los Angeles

Baum: Why did you decide to go into government work at this time?

Camp: Well, officials of the Triple A farm program in Washington, including Dr. Howard Tolley, who was the first director of the Giannini Foundation, at the University of California, he knew me pretty well--he got in touch with me and persuaded me that I owed it to the state and my country to go back, because I knew cotton all across the country instead of just in California, and it would be important to have somebody in the Cotton Program who could think of it in terms of the whole country. So on the basis of that and only as a temporary matter, a short-term proposition, I agreed to go back. Not as a permanent thing.

Baum: Were you on leave from the bank?

Camp: No, no, I knew that I was coming back to California to go into my own farming. I planned then when I left the bank, I knew that I was going into work for myself.

Baum: That wasn't a very good time to go into farming for yourself, was it?

Camp: It was and it wasn't. There was lots of good land available for a song, and it was good from that standpoint. The price of the product wasn't very good.

But I went to Washington in the early fall of 1933 first and then I went permanently in December of '33, and stayed until December 7, 1936. But I was all over the United States in that work.

Baum: Your first job was as regional representative in charge of irrigated cotton?

Camp: That's what they first said and that's true, with headquarters in Los Angeles.

Baum: This was the announcement in December.

Camp: That's right. And I did set up headquarters in Los Angeles; I got an office there. But I was on the plane every week. I made an average of one round trip to Washington and back and other parts of the Cotton Belt every week, and it wasn't many months, not even many weeks, until I was having to spend considerable time in Washington as well as in other states in cotton work too. So during 1934 they decided I must move to Washington.

Baum: When you first took the job did you think you could stay in either Los Angeles or Bakersfield?

Camp: At first they said maybe Bakersfield, and then I had to do a lot of plane travel to get to places so it wasn't convenient to live in Bakersfield. I had to be in Los Angeles so I could get in and out in a hurry. As I say, I averaged one round trip a week to Washington.

Baum: And that was in the days when plane travel wasn't so usual.

Camp: No. It was quite different to what it is now. Sometimes I had to ride the old Ford airplane, which had three engines on it, and that was a killer. It was worse than the Ford Model T automobile, and actually I got just about as tired sometimes and nervous from riding that as I ever did from riding in a Model T. However, they soon quit making them.

They had sleepers on the planes and I would get a sleeper, either an upper or a lower, whatever was available, and I would sleep most of the way to Washington. It would land several times; it wasn't non-stop by any means but when it would come down and land at some airport usually I'd wake up and go back to sleep. It took then--it wasn't a four-hour trip like it is now. It was actually a full day to get there or all night to get there. And yet we got around very fast.

Baum: Did your family move to Los Angeles?

Camp: Yes, for that one year, or at least part of that one year. Otherwise I couldn't have been with them much at all.

Baum: Did you have to set up a whole administration in Los Angeles?

Camp: Yes. I wouldn't say administration; I never did want that. I set up, rented an office and hired a secretary and then ultimately had to get one other woman to do some research work in a hurry so I'd have my figures all together, but I never did want a staff bigger than that in Los Angeles. I could have but I didn't want it. Of course, I wasn't there much.

Irrigated Lands with No Cotton History

Baum: Even before you went into the AAA you'd gone back to Washington to arrange that Kern County farmers could be included in the cotton allotments.

Camp: Well, I'm surprised that you have that information. It does remind me of what happened. Earlier in our conversations I have indicated that the bank had a vision of cotton being worthwhile; well, based on that, plus experiments at the Experiment Station, farmers out here did plant more cotton, and particularly in 1933, because there was no profitable market for any of the fruits, vegetables were cheap, so cotton seemed the best bet and quite a number of people planted cotton in '33 for the first time. Then when they curtailed at the end of '33, the Bankhead Cotton Bill was introduced and passed, so it caught the California people and some in Arizona in a very bad way because they had made a heavy investment.

They'd leveled a lot of land, drilled a lot of wells, and so on, and it would bankrupt the whole thing, all of them, if they were not permitted to use that one year's history to build on. So we persuaded Washington, showed them the situation exactly as it was, and they agreed that it was necessary to make a special ruling for growers in the irrigated areas who had gone to all that expense. And that's what you were talking about, I guess.

Baum: Yes. I think the base years were 1928 to 1933, and that would have just about squeezed out the California farmers.

Camp: That's right. It would have squeezed them out. But this other made it possible and was fair to everybody.

Baum: This was only allowed for certain areas.

Camp: Irrigated areas. It was specified.

Baum: And they had to prove that they had already put in the investment.

Camp: Well, that was easy to do. It was up to the state committee and the county committees; there was no possibility or likelihood of any cheating on that. So it worked out all right.

San Joaquin Valley Farmers Join the Cotton Program in 1933

Baum: I think the Agricultural Adjustment Act was passed in June of 1933, and that they immediately wanted cotton acreage reduced.

Camp: That's right.

Baum: And that meant plowing under the crop that had been planted already.

Camp: Yes. There was talk of plowing under one third of it, I believe--every third row. Well, they did that. I think it was one third. They did that in lots of places, and they had to do it. It was still voluntary, but if they didn't co-operate that year they were in a bad way for the Program the next year, you see.

Baum: Did San Joaquin farmers plow under?

Camp: A lot of them did, yes. It was based on that voluntary co-operation that in Washington they were willing to make this other concession, the special ruling.

Baum: That seems like a dangerous step for them to take, inasmuch as they weren't even included in the base history at that time.

Camp: Well, somebody had some faith, I guess. A lot of us did a lot of arguing, and persuaded them.

Baum: When you were still working for the bank did you persuade them, encourage them to co-operate with that program?

Camp: We all got all the information we could get, and it was my judgment that it would be a fine thing to do, a necessary thing to do. I've forgotten what the payments were but there were cash payments for plowing under. And all crops then were so low in price, so cheap, that farmers were desperate for cash from most any source.

Baum: Then another thing you did right away, you announced that no finance company would loan money for next year's crop--I guess this was for production costs--unless the farmer was co-operating with the AAA Program.

Camp: I was instrumental--I won't say I did it alone, but anyway I was instrumental in getting the finance companies, oil mills, and the banks and so on, to agree on that thinking, and then it was they who said they would not advance any money. Of course, they were doing it for two reasons, one was to co-operate, but it was just good banking. The risk was much less where they put it out with the man who was co-operating. Otherwise they didn't know whether they'd get their money back or not.

But again I want to stress the point that it was an emergency measure, it was a desperate situation. Farmers were in need of money to live on--not just cotton growers but all of them, and some of us were thinking of these measures only in terms of short-run two or three year propositions. Had no idea that it would be continued by the folks who want planned agriculture. I don't belong to that group.

Assistant Director of the Southern Division and of the Cotton
Division; Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Responsibilities of the Southern Division: Director, Cully A. Cobb

Baum: When you moved back to Washington, was this a change in your title?

Camp: Oh, sometime during '33 they made a change in my title and made me--I've forgotten when it was officially announced, but made me an assistant director of the Cotton Program all over the United States, and there were some other titles, too. I've forgotten what they were. Principal economist, and then there was "head economist." I don't know what they meant, I don't think they did either, but anyway when I went back to Washington I was second in charge of the whole Program in the southern states, all crops, all the Triple A Program, and the Cotton Program in all the states in the United States. That included California and Arizona and New Mexico. We had nothing to do with any crop in those states, except cotton, but we had complete charge of that.

Baum: You were in charge of cotton all over the United States?

Camp: Yes. Mr. Cully A. Cobb was the director and I was the second man in charge.

Baum: And you were also in charge of all crops?

Camp: In the southern states. Southern Division. They divided up the United States into five divisions for the sake of easy operation, I guess, administration, but anyway all of the cotton growing states plus one or two border states were in the southern region--Southern Division, I believe they called it at first. So we had to plan the operations of all of the crops there.

Baum: Was that under Mr. Cobb also?

Camp: Oh yes. Mr. Cobb was the director and Mr. Cobb went in at the beginning, and when I first went back in '33, late summer or early fall, Dr. Tolley and he had asked me to, and I met Mr. Cobb, and it wasn't long until he and I got well acquainted and he too persuaded me to join him. I didn't know Mr. Cobb prior to that time, but I am now happy to say that I have never known anywhere a finer fellow and one more thoroughly interested in the welfare of the farmers than he, and it was a pleasure to work with him.

He was the son of a Baptist minister in Tennessee and he had slept in a barn milking cows to work his way through the land grant college in Mississippi, and then he had charge of boys' work and then agriculture publications and so on, and he was well known all over the South, the best known of any one man at that time.

Baum: I'm afraid I don't know much about the work of the Southern Division. What other crops did you have?

Camp: We had every crop that had been grown and all of those that they tried out as new ventures in the southern states, including corn, wheat--all the grains, all the cowpeas and cover crops; of course, dairying came under it--livestock as such didn't, but the ranges did, and we persuaded Mr. Grover Hill from west Texas to come back to Washington. He had had experience in the rangeland work, so he was put in charge of that part, under the Southern Division, so he planned the practices and measures that were carried out on the ranges for the benefit of cattle growers.

Baum: On most of these other crops, did you have a man who would be under you in charge of that particular crop all over?

Camp: To a degree, yes.

Baum: Some of the crops were too small.

Camp: Yes, they were. Some of them a man would have to work in several crops. In the Southern Division we had to set up, as the others did too, quite an organization. It was no trouble then to recruit good men, because, again, the country was very desperately poor, and good men were looking for jobs, so we were able to build a good staff in a hurry.

Baum: Were most of these men college of agriculture graduates?

Camp: Oh yes, all of them, practically, in our work in the Southern Division. I don't know about the others.

Failure to Pass a Federal One-Variety Cotton Enabling Law

Camp: While in that, one of the things that I tried to do was to get an enabling law passed in Washington to permit any county or area in the cotton producing country to vote themselves a one-variety district, if they wanted to. I talked it over with a lot of cotton people--they wanted it. Mr. Cobb was thoroughly in accord with the idea. He and I wanted it to

Camp: do the same thing that the one-variety law was doing for the cotton industry in California, but it would naturally have to be a little bit different in some of the mechanics, we thought, so we wanted to pass an enabling act and leave the rest of it up to the agricultural colleges, experiment stations, and the cotton growers in those areas. Entirely voluntary, nothing compulsory at all.

But we were administering a lot of money, millions of dollars, and some of us thought that much of it could be used to better advantage maybe, and since I had had so much work with the one-variety out here in California and since we were so fortunate in getting them to adopt it, why, we talked it over back there with Secretary Henry Wallace, the Secretary of Agriculture, and he thought it was a fine idea and he went for it in a big way. He made some speeches about it, what it was going to do, and what we planned from the standpoint of the cotton grower in any county or area within the state.

It was up to the colleges or growers, and if they got a district that wanted to grow all one variety of certified seed cotton, we would recommend that the Triple A money that was being used for one purpose or another, retiring cotton acreage, planting cover crops, and many other things--we would take a portion of that money and buy certified seed that was voluntarily recommended by the growers and the state colleges--let them do all the selecting of the best variety, but when they got that all done, said, "Here is the district; we would like to have pure seed," we were going to designate enough money to put out into that state to buy all of the seed that was needed for that area, and donate the seed to the growers. We felt in that way there would be, could be, no opposition, because it was all voluntary everywhere, nothing compulsory. And then free seed, no expense.

It looked like a good thing and it was, I'm sure, but when we were about ready to announce it--. We had made a survey. I had them working all over the different states, and I got a survey, and we had, I've forgotten exactly, six or seven hundred varieties of cotton were being grown. In some areas there would be ten or twenty-five varieties in a county, which was terrible. They never could get real good cotton, uniform length and strength that the mills would all be willing to buy, anxious to buy, like they were the California cotton. We were getting from one to five-cent premiums for our cotton out here because of the uniformity of it.

Camp: Well, we had it about ready to go and introduce the bill and I was very happy, everyone was, seemed to be, and one morning Secretary Wallace called us in and said, "Well, I guess we can't do that." He didn't tell us why, but it didn't take Mr. Cobb and me long to figure out why. There was a very influential cotton breeder, private breeder, in the South who thought this would not be good for his private business. I'm sure he was sincere, no thought that he wanted to kill off something good, but anyway, he thought it would not be good for his business, therefore it wouldn't be good for the cotton growers, that he was in a better position to know than maybe these colleges or experiment stations were.

Well, we said no, it wouldn't hurt him--couldn't hurt him. It probably would be his salvation, because undoubtedly if he had the best seed, the experiment stations, the colleges, would recommend that seed; therefore it would be his seed that the government would buy to give.

But they didn't see it that way and they overruled us, so we have felt ever since that a great opportunity was passed up there, to get in a hurry a lot of districts in one variety of cotton. However, that's the way the ball bounces. I guess I wasn't a good enough salesman.

Baum: Any district can vote itself into a one-variety district through the state legislature? So this would have been mainly an educational effort?

Camp: That's right. An enabling act in Washington would have been compulsory on no one at all, but it would have permitted this kind of a thing to take place easily. But they didn't want to do it. Then a few years later a director of Extension of one of those states--well, I don't think he would object if I mentioned it--South Carolina, my own home state--director of Extension D. W. Watkins--in private conversation with me afterwards opposed this proposal that we wanted, and I couldn't understand it. But about six or eight years later when I was visiting back there he very gleefully told me one day, he said, "You know, Bill, we have just about got one-variety cotton in all of South Carolina now." I looked at him right quickly and he knew what I meant. He'd let his foot slip so far as I was concerned.

I said to him, I said, "Well, D. W., why did you fight me so hard on the bill that I wanted to put through Congress?"

And he frankly confessed, made his statement right quick,

Camp: he said, "Frankly, I just didn't know enough about it. I didn't know how it could work out and why one variety would be so helpful."

But in many of the states now, some areas have one-variety cotton. But it's been slow coming about, whereas this other would have been rapid-fire. And it would have put to good use a lot of money that we felt was pouring down the rat hole.

Baum: I'm afraid I got away from the beginning of your story there of the Triple A Cotton Program and the part you had to play in Washington.

Working Arrangements of the Cotton Contracts

Baum: Getting back to these inducements to sign up, I read that in some cases neighbor growers who had signed agreements threatened or sometimes burned the crops of farmers who had not signed up. This was in 1933, before you came in.

Camp: 1933? Well, you can hear all kinds of things, but I don't personally know of any neighbors who burned or who threatened. As I said, when I was still in Fresno it was all new and we got together many many times and discussed and tried to get as much information as we could and decide what our judgment would be, what to do. But there might have been some of this other that I didn't know about.

Baum: They tried different ways in different years to pay for this acreage limitation. I think the first year they paid by the acre.

Camp: Yes, that was something in a hurry, you see, because it was a desperate situation. And then the Bankhead program, when it came in, we had a cotton price adjustment payment which operated for two years, and there the grower was permitted to sell his cotton and he kept the record of that, and then there was a formula set up in Washington--it operated out in the states, though--but if he got less than the parity or whatever per cent of parity it was, the government would issue a check for the difference. Well now, that original money didn't come out of the government treasury, it came out of processing taxes that were collected.

Camp: A lot of things were tried in a hurry and some of them weren't so good, but that worked very smoothly and would be not objectionable to most growers now, except for the fact that the so-called do-gooders and those people who want to force everybody back into the same size of operation, they put limitations on the payment that can go to any grower, so if you have more than a certain, whatever these social-minded folks set it at, if it's fifty acres or one hundred acres or whatever it is, if it turned out to be one thousand dollars or five thousand dollars or ten thousand dollars, as they have done from time to time, as the maximum that can go to anyone, why then the fellow who has really tried to mechanize and got an efficient operation going, if it should happen to be a little bigger than that, why, he's completely cut off at the pockets, and except for that one thing, this other type of payment isn't so bad today. But--.

Baum: Well, this just paid for the cotton you did grow. How did they pay you for the cotton you didn't grow?

Camp: Well, of course they would pay you so much per acre there--no, per acre times the past average yield, so much a pound. Really, I've forgotten some of the details of that. I helped set it up, but you're asking me here something that I--.
[Laughing]

Baum: What I got from the book was that they paid, in the '34 and '35 contracts, so much per pound of cotton you didn't raise, and based it on your expected yield. Or on your cotton history.

Camp: On your cotton history, and if your past history was a bale and a half to the acre, say, and you left out twenty-five acres, it was that times the price, whatever it was, nine cents or fifteen cents, or whatever. It was a very fair way. It wasn't particularly complicated, it really worked out, and we set up committees across the country in a hurry working in co-operation with the county agents, and we insisted, Cobb and I, that the county agents have the authority to work with these and kind of supervise it.

In some states, Professor Crocheron in California didn't want the county agents taking up their time for that. He didn't believe in it in the first place. Anyhow, it wasn't that we wanted to make them do it. We wanted to make sure that nothing was done in that county, that the county agent and the experiment station people didn't think it was the right thing.

Battle Over the Role of Extension Service

Baum: The first year it was entirely under the Extension Service? And then in '34 and '35 they set up the county committees and the state review committee?

Camp: Yes.

Baum: Was this the system you and Cobb were for?

Camp: Yes, that was part of our thinking, but we still were the ones who held out that the Extension Service should be, by all means, the ones that said that it was being done right or wrong. They had the veto of it. I mean, we were the ones who said they should have the veto of it.

I could say something here that doesn't apply, and I can't give it as my authority, I can't at all, but at this time--as a matter of fact, at the beginning of the Triple A program--there was slightly any question at all but what the Extension Service would have been completely done away with if it hadn't been for Cully Cobb and one or two other folks. But he led the parade for Extension Service--not for them, but he insisted that the Extension Service was the finest agricultural agency in America, had been and should continue to be, and the New Deal boys who came along felt, frankly, and this is off the record and I do not want it in any document of mine--Cully Cobb can give the story^{*}--but those fellows in the early part of the New Deal wanted to wipe out the Extension Service, and would have, in my judgment, if it hadn't been for Cully Cobb. And I think there is a document written in one of the books somewhere that one of the assistant National Extension Service fellows wrote an account of that.

Baum: We recorded some of that from Claude Hutchison.

Camp: Well, Hutchison wouldn't be back there.

Baum: No, but he knew that there was an effort to turn it all over to the Department of Agriculture.

Camp: The immediate effort was, wipe out the Agricultural Extension Service. I didn't know that these people knew what went on

* See ROHO interview with Cully Cobb for confirmation.

Camp: behind the closed doors. These were in executive sessions, that I'm talking about, and they were determined that the Extension Service go. Cully Cobb and I later--.

Baum: Was this because the Extension Service was "growing two blades of grass where one grew before" and they didn't want that done any more?

Camp: Well, I was just about to tell you that Cully Cobb and I, if no one else, later came to the conclusion, and we still are of the same conclusion, that these planners, New Deal planners at that time, they wanted to socialize everything, knew that the Extension Service was doing a fine job and that they could not, within that, quickly do what they wanted to do. They had a formula, there's no question, they had a program, and that program is still the same people under cover trying to carry on. But I happen to know the part that Cully Cobb played, because even though M. L. Wilson later became director of the National Extension Service, he would have been perfectly willing at the beginning to go on along with this group that wanted to get rid of the Extension Service.

Baum: Was Cully Cobb at that time in the AAA?

Camp: Cully Cobb was director of the Cotton Division. This was the beginning, in the formulation of all--.

Baum: They wanted to do away with Extension and put Department of Agriculture men in charge of the program?

Camp: Well, maybe I've not made myself clear. I was just talking about one phase of it. They wanted the Extension Service people out of the way, period, because some of these planners realized that here was a group of dedicated people, and that as long as they were there they can't go out and do to agriculture what they have in mind, at least Cully and I are convinced that was it. There's no question in my mind at all, and none in Cully's.

Cully having been in Extension work in Mississippi, in charge of boys' club work for the state, and worked with them all the time as an editor of a farm magazine, had gone on many world-wide tours and he was chairman of the groups, Extension people and others, and even though at that time and for some time past he hadn't been in Extension work he was dedicated to Extension methods. So I know the Extension Service has him to thank for an awful lot of battles that went on behind closed doors.

Baum: Was he responsible for getting the Extension director of each state put in charge of this AAA program the first year?

Camp: That's right. Not that it was necessarily right; these things are done in a hurry, you know. But his dedication and his faith in the Extension work and only thinking of it as a temporary thing, not a permanent thing, it was his contention--and then when I came along with him we were so completely in accord on everything--but Cully Cobb himself is due the credit for fighting off those birds who wanted to do away with it. Extension Service was expendable, in fact it was in the way, to these planners. No question about that. I don't know whether Dean Hutchison was aware of all of the details back of that or not, but I am. I know exactly what went on.

A Plan for Planned Agriculture

Camp: I hadn't been in Washington but just a few days until a man brought a document down to me, a very thick document, and asked me to read it, and not let anybody see it. This was late in the afternoon, and I was to lock it in my desk at night, which I did. Next morning he came, the same man, and got it, and he was the executive assistant, right arm, of Howard Tolley and some other planners. He picked up the document, asked if I'd let anybody else see it, and I told him, "No."

At one o'clock that same day Cully Cobb and I were eating lunch in the restaurant in the agriculture building, and this same man came and tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Dr. Tolley wants you up at his office at two o'clock."

When he left I said to Cobb, I says, "How come? You're the director here; I'm just your flunky and I just got here. Why should I go into a meeting?" I didn't want to go.

And he says, he laughed, he says, "Well, you'll find out. You go on. Just keep your eyes open and your ears open, but you go on." He didn't tell me any more.

I went and I sat in the meeting. There were about six or seven, I've forgotten, but not more than seven, I think.

Camp: Dr. Tolley was presiding and they discussed this paper. One of the other men was Rex Tugwell. I've forgotten the exact title now--"Twenty Year Program for American Agriculture." If those aren't the exact words this was the first written--. They discussed it for about six or eight minutes, just skirting around the edges of it, I guess, and Tolley looked right at me then and said, "Bill, what's your opinion of this?"

I said, "Dr. Tolley, I've only been in town a few days and I'm in no sense of the word qualified to discuss it." This was the document I read that night before.

I said, "I don't feel qualified, I'm not qualified. You folks have discussed this thing, you know what you have in mind, and I'm just not qualified, and furthermore Mr. Cobb is director of the Southern Region. I'm just his assistant."

So he said, "Well, you are qualified," but he went on and they discussed it for another five minutes or so, and he stopped suddenly and he said, "Now, Bill, what's your opinion?"

I said, "The same thing. I have no opinion now different to what I said. I don't feel qualified."

And he said, "Yes you are, I know you well enough to know that you have a very definite opinion on this."

Baum: You knew Tolley before?

Camp: I'd known him in California. I'd saved him from being thrown out of several meetings, raisin and grape meetings, in Fresno when I was with the bank, so he assumed--that's why he wanted to induce me to go to Washington, was that relationship. So he assumed that I would go right along with his thinking. I guess he did, I don't know.

But when he pressed me the second time I said, "Well, if you insist on my opinion I have to tell you I can't go along with it at all. It looks too radical, too wild, for me."

Quickly, suddenly, the meeting came to a close, the door opened and I went out, and I was never called back to another one of that kind.

But I did go down immediately and go in Cobb's room and close the door and told him what went on. He laughed out loud.

Camp: He said, "I knew you were getting into a bunch of--he called them a nice name, he never swore. But anyway, I knew what he meant. And it was only then that I knew that that same group hated the very ground that he walked on, because he had stopped them on these things before, and they were trying it out on me, because it was through the South that these fellows wanted to do their first dirty work, through the Negroes and through the sharecroppers. They thought they had a place to do something.

Baum: They were going to work around Cobb?

Camp: They were going to use me to go around Cobb, and it was right then and there, until this day and until we both die, I can't have a better friend in the world. He stood foursquare. So that document was quite a document, quite a document. I never saw it again, never heard of it again, but it was a part of their program. One of the things it said, for instance, was that all agriculture, and when I say all it meant everything having to do with any teaching of agriculture or demonstrations of, or what-have-you, there would be a czar in Washington, one man in charge of everything--grammar school teaching out in the country and the sticks, everywhere. He'd have a staff in charge of different commodities and phases, and then they might break down the United States into three or four, not more than five, areas, and duplicate that with a czar in charge there.

But it would go into every phase of agriculture that was taught or administered within every state; as I say, the teaching of agriculture in high schools, colleges, grammar schools, everywhere had to comply with this. It was very easy for me, naïve as I was and green as I was, I very quickly saw that this meant--and I hardly knew what socialized agriculture or medicine or what-have-you was then at that age, with my experience--but it meant something that I didn't want, and I didn't agree.

Baum: Is Cully Cobb still in Georgia?

Camp: Still in Georgia, Atlanta, Georgia, but Howard Tolley was finally--well, I guess I shouldn't say fired, but anyway, he left the Department and then he went in with the Ford Foundation, both he and Chester Davis. Chester Davis was out of that long ago. He was the number two man. Howard Tolley left the Ford Foundation a few years later, I don't know why. He's dead now. But he was not the kind of a man that we in California, when he was made the first director of the Giannini Foundation, his basic thinking was not what I wished American agriculture to be. I guess I'd better not say any more than that.

Baum: The feeling of Extension Service was, not that they thought they were going to be done away with, but that they didn't want to get into any regulatory--.

Camp: I don't blame 'em.

Baum: Because they thought this would lose them their value as educators.

Camp: That's right, but Cully Cobb's idea, and some of us who were only there for a temporary job, not for the job at all but to do a job, intended it only to be two or three years, and therefore anything that can lift the grower up for those two or three years, the Extension Service was as much as anybody-- in fact, more actively interested than anybody.

Baum: I think Extension was glad to do it on an emergency basis, so long as everyone knew that they would not remain in any regulatory --.

Camp: That's exactly it, and that's the only thing that Cully Cobb had in mind. He had an assistant who was so completely in accord with him that we thought exactly alike all the time.

State and County Review Boards

Baum: I think in 1934 the director of Extension, who would be Crocheron here in California, appointed a three-man review board for the state, and that the county agents appointed three-man county and community boards to look over the contracts and check on anything that went through. Is that as you recall it?

Camp: That's almost correct. In cotton, in '34, we in Washington asked that three certain fellows in California be appointed, and we did officially appoint them in Washington--Hugh Jewett, a fellow named Harry W. Mellen of Delano--we had to have Mellen made the executive officer of it--and M. B. Hopper of Fresno, were a three-man committee on cotton. Not the other crops, just cotton.

And then we went ahead and hired a secretary for cotton in the committee; he was to work under the county agent, but he was paid by our cotton office. In other words, again we had some funds that were being used, turned over to us, and some people spent it wildly, but again I come back to my

Camp: one-variety thing, I wanted to spend some of the money that we were throwing away, I thought, for useful purposes.

Baum: These three men were the state review board. Then there were county committees and even lesser committees, community committees. How did that work?

Camp: Worked all right. It was an emergency.

Baum: Were the growers happy with the way it worked out?

Camp: Oh, we couldn't say that all growers were happy, no, because there would always be some soreheads. It was purely local, and again an emergency program, and Cully Cobb and some of us wanted the county agents, the Extension Service who had done such an outstanding job on all matters that they'd been into agriculturally, we wanted them to have the veto power whether they themselves worked in here, so that, well, everybody would know that it was on the up-and-up.

Baum: I think I read some criticism that some growers felt that these county committees or community committees were always the large growers, and that therefore what they wanted was what would be possible for the large grower and not for the small grower.

Camp: Yes, there was some argument like that in different places, but frankly, you know, well, being realistic, that just wasn't true. I mean generally it wasn't true. It might have been in one or two cases. Those committeemen were elected, you know.

Baum: But they were elected by a group--.

Camp: They were elected one vote, one man, no matter whether you had one acre or a thousand.

Baum: I think the county agent appointed charter members...

Camp: That was at first.

Baum: ...that could vote for the committee, and that these charter members happened to be the large growers because they were the men who came into the program first.

Camp: That might have been that first year, but it didn't go that way very long.

Baum: It finally worked out completely democratically?

Camp: Yes, completely. I can believe that there would be some in the United States as a whole, but I can't believe that percentage-wise there'd be many county agents who would do anything but appoint what they thought was a good conscientious man, no matter whether he was little or big. And that's the kind of faith that we had in the Extension Service. That was an organization that had been tried and proven useful and had done a grand job. Why try to set up a separate organization for a temporary program? Again, we refused to look at it, Cully and some of us, as anything beyond two or three years. That was to start with. I stayed on there four years nearly. So did he. But we had hoped at the beginning, you know, that it would get a lot better right quick.

It was slow in getting better, but then they found out, and now we know, that the social planners, the planners of agriculture, intended to have a permanent planned agriculture. And they don't make any bones about it. They say so. Freeman will say that now, and I don't know Freeman personally, I'm not saying anything against Freeman, but this has been going on for quite a while, by those people who want that kind of a program.

My gosh, I'll say to you, young lady, you have picked up from reading somewhere a lot of details that a lot of folks have forgotten all about.

Blow-up Over Tenant Provisions of the Cotton Contracts

Baum: In February, 1935 there was a shake-up of the Legal Division over whether the farmer with tenants had to keep the same number of tenants, or the very same tenants. You can tell me about that from first-hand knowledge.

Camp: Yes indeed. Well, we got into a hassle with some of the economists in the Legal Division over the wording of the two-year cotton contract which had already been written and in effect for one year, and we had written into that contract

Camp: a clause to this effect: that the farmer in signing this and agreeing to perform, and that he would get a certain amount of money for his performance, he agreed to keep as nearly as possible the same number of tenants he had on his farm, if any, that he had the year before. That was put in there specifically, recommended by Mr. Cobb and others in the Division, so as to make sure that no greedy landlord would want to sign this contract and then, if he had a lot of sharecroppers or tenants, kick them off and take all the money himself, and maybe not even plant much cotton. But we wanted to prevent any possibility of that, and it worked fine. Nobody objected to that.

When they went to sign for the next year though, the Legal Division and some of the economists working with them insisted that that paragraph didn't mean what it said at all; even though we wrote it they interpreted it for us, saying that it meant that the cotton grower must keep exactly the same tenants if he had any, no matter what they had done, how poor, mean, or what they had been into, he had to keep exactly the same tenants. Then there were some other things that went along that they said it meant too, but that was the main thing.

Well, of course that wasn't what it meant, and no cotton growers, no farmers of any kind, could operate with that kind of a thing hanging over them. In most cases it worked out fine but there might be, would be, some instances where you had to get rid of a farmer. He may have burned your barn down or something else. So there was quite a hassle over that and it took several weeks to come to a conclusion. The conclusion wasn't arrived at until one Saturday night when the executive secretary of Secretary Wallace signed the telegram that went out to the cotton states, saying to the state officers, "You must interpret paragraph so-and-so to mean that you must keep exactly the same tenants, no matter what."

Well, of course it couldn't be, and that was against our recommendation. That telegram had been written by the Legal Division of the Triple A; Lee Pressman was one of the lawyers. I think he was second in command. Jerome Frank was solicitor, and Lee Pressman, who said he was not a communist then, but at this point I'll say that some eight or ten years ago from right now, after he had been with the CIO and other places, he did confess before the House Un-American Activities Committee that he was a communist at

Camp: the time these clauses were written and the telegram went out, when he was fired. Well, anyway, as a result of that there was a shakeup; all of those lawyers were fired overnight. I don't think I need to go into the details of how and why. It is quite a historic thing, but it does definitely nail down one plank at least and show exactly what those fellows were trying to do to the agricultural economy of America.

Baum: Wasn't it the Southern Tenant Farmers Union that was doing all the agitating and wanted this clause interpreted in the manner that you say it was? That they had to keep the same tenants.

Camp: Yes, and the president of that organization was a fellow named Mitchell, and he came to Washington and brought several people up with him--most of them not cotton growers, of course--but we had to have some hearings and did. We were very eager to see what they were up to. They were not trying to do anything good for the cotton industry itself at all.

Baum: Was this the issue they were there about?

Camp: Well, this was one of them, but they actually were agitating all the time, and if I may speak plainly, the pinks and near-pinks and the sympathizers, fellow travelers and so on, were the group that had been in there working. As I say, Lee Pressman confessed later before the House Un-American Activities Committee that he was a communist. Well, Alger Hiss had been assigned to us as our attorney in the early part of this, and it didn't take us long to determine what he and his henchmen were there trying to do.

I think that I made a statement in a speech that I made before the Commonwealth Club about ten years ago in San Francisco that I did have a part to play in those fellows being dismissed from the Agriculture Department and that I had no regrets about it, and if an Alger Hiss went to jail, why, I wasn't among the mourners because they certainly and definitely were in the Agriculture Department to make trouble for America. They intended, as one of their first things, to use the race situation in cotton growing; they had lots of Negroes growing cotton and most of the Negroes were down South, so they had a very definite program, and I was permitted--or otherwise--anyhow I got wise to what much of their program was to be. It was to use the Negroes against the whites and agitate, and it was also to use the sharecroppers against landlords. Again this agitation. If Mr. Cobb and I were helpful in bringing some of that to light, I'm very happy.

Baum: Was that a new union?

Camp: It was a new union formed--Mitchell himself was not a cotton grower. He was a man who had--which is quite all right--a little cleaning and pressing shop in Little Rock or Memphis or somewhere in Mississippi--I've forgotten the detail. But he turned out to be just an agitator and still is. His name cropped up later on in 1947 when a picket line was planted, goon squads around the farm that I was interested in in California, and he was the national president of this farm labor organization, and of course as quickly as I saw that I realized that he was the same Mitchell. So I naturally went to work then too to stave off what he was trying to do, because he's not up to any good thing for any business at all.

Baum: I know there was a problem about payments for reducing acreage, who it should go to. Should it go to the landlord or the tenant or sharecropper, and in what percentage? Was this the purpose of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, to get a larger percentage of these payments?

Camp: I'll say that it was the purpose of the agitators, under whatever name they paraded, and that was just one of them, to create an atmosphere of suspicion, that there was something wrong, so that there'd be investigations one after another. We did in some instances find that some landlords had purposely tried to take over the money, but that was the exception and not the rule. But you'll find crooks today, too.

Baum: In some cases I think the landlord got the whole payment and he was supposed to divide it on a certain pre-arranged basis with his tenants.

Camp: Very definitely. We had it all set up in the program, in the contract, and there was no misunderstanding the language at all. We didn't have too many instances throughout the United States where the landlord had deliberately taken advantage. We had some. There was one county in Texas where we had an investigator there for weeks and weeks and we found that some of the committeemen were in cahoots with some of the others, but we ran it down from Washington and I think did a pretty good job of sending folks to jail. But I found--I personally had to fly out to some of the states several times to look into it--that some of those same agitators had got into the other side of that and were causing more agitation. It was really more smoke, usually, than any trouble.

Baum: Which department was in charge of this landlord-tenant relationship? I don't think that was under the Cotton Division.

Camp: It wasn't, and yet it was, insofar as the cotton growers were concerned. We kept our hands right on and kept up with what was going on. There was a division set up for it, but they could not know what ought to be and what was intended like the Cotton Division itself did, so we made it our business to see that they did their job as the contracts themselves provided. I'd almost forgotten about all those things, gee whiz. [Laughing]

Baum: I don't have the date when this executive order went out that they had to have the identical tenants, but I know that on February 12, 1935, Secretary Wallace sent out another executive order indicating that the section did not bind the owners to keep the identical tenants. What happened between there?

Camp: Well, I'll tell you precisely what happened if you want to know. That order went out on a Saturday night, signed by his executive secretary, that they had to keep them, and all of those lawyers over there were jubilant, but when Monday morning came--we didn't know anything about it going out. We had had a committee of three working on it, we had assigned one, the lawyers had assigned one, and they selected another. They knew what they wanted; they wanted agitation, they wanted the things that were wrong. We knew what had to be, and it was just two immovable objects. We were trying to do the right thing, were determined to, we would not stand for the other. Then they sent that thing out unknowing to the Cotton Division.

Early the next Monday morning when I got down to the office the telegrams were there from the different state offices and telephones were ringing, and senators and congressmen were calling, "How come, how come?" Quickly I got all the facts together, found out they had sent this wire, and knowing Mr. Cobb's attitude--he was down in Texas--we had talked it all over for so many weeks, there was only one way to go. Mr. E. D. White was there, from Arkansas. He was the chief state officer of Arkansas. And I said, "E. D., let's go up to see Dr. Tolley."

So we go up on another floor. Dr. Tolley says to me--this was early Monday morning, mind you, "What's the matter, Bill?"

Camp: And I said to him, "Nothing much, except we're getting ready to announce that there'll be no more Cotton Program at all in the United States."

And he said, "What do you mean?"

I looked at him, I said, "Dr. Tolley, you know what I mean. You know that a telegram went out Saturday night signed by--this executive secretary--and you know what it said. You also know our position and you know that we're not prepared and will not accept that interpretation."

I said, "I have no authority, but we're going to send out orders, regardless of what anybody says, that the Cotton Program is breaking up."

And he said to me, "Let's go down to see Chester Davis."

So we went down the hall to Chester Davis, who was the director. Tolley was at that time the associate or assistant director of the Triple A.

We went into Chester Davis' office. Chester said to Tolley, "What's the trouble?"

And Tolley said, "Chester, Bill Camp's on the warpath again."

Chester looked at me and said, "What's the matter, Bill?"

I told him that I'd just told Tolley we were going to announce to the Southern Division, all states, that the Cotton Program was busting up, there'd be no more. And he says, "What do you mean?"

I said, "You perhaps know about the telegram that went out Saturday night," and of course by that time they'd been calling him too and he did know. He also knew that I had no authority but that I had plenty of intestinal fortitude and he knew I was going to do exactly what I said.

He said, "Well, Bill, let's see if we can work it out."

Well, after a little more conversation White and I go on back down to my office. On the way down I ask White how quickly he could get to Arkansas. He said, "I can leave at one o'clock," and I said, "Well, get there quickly and tell your people the situation and tell the Farm Bureau

Camp: president and all of them just what the situation is, and we'll go to work from this end."

Well, quickly I called many senators, chairmen of many committees; included among them was Chairman "Cotton Ed Smith" of South Carolina, who was chairman of the Senate Agricultural Committee. I called Congressman Fulmer, also of South Carolina, who was chairman of the House Agricultural Committee--both of them good friends of ours, and had co-operated with us and knew we were trying to do the right thing. They knew about this thing beforehand. We had been going on for so many weeks we had them all notified as to what the lawyers were trying to do, so when I called them on Monday I didn't have to inform them in detail. I called Joe Robinson of Little Rock, Arkansas--I believe he was the Senate leader, whatever they call it. I called Pat Harrison, who I believe was chairman of the Finance Committee, from Mississippi, and others.

We went into a huddle and told them what the situation was and they said, "Well, we can't have it and won't," and it was decided--who made the suggestion as to what to do first I don't know, but anyway it was decided that they themselves as a committee go to the Secretary of Agriculture.

They did, on Monday afternoon. They told Wallace, "Secretary Wallace, we don't have to explain to you. This thing has been in the committee here battling around for so many weeks that everybody's informed as to what the issues are, and we're saying to you we won't live with it, and we're also saying to you that all of these lawyers who drew this up, from Jerome Frank down, that they must be fired."

And they stayed there some little time and Wallace apparently gave them no satisfaction; they came back to me and said that they weren't satisfied with what he had said. He made no statement at all about that, whether he would or wouldn't fire them.

So they on Tuesday morning decided that they would go to President Roosevelt's office, the White House, and they did. I'd been sitting with them between there, and Mr. Cobb was still in Texas, but I was in touch with him by phone. They went to Roosevelt and told him what they had told Wallace and they said, "Mr. President, we weren't satisfied there. We're saying to you--we're asking you to fire these people, and we're saying to you that if they're

Camp: not fired, and until they go, there will be no major legislation go through at all that you might want."

And I assume that the President knew they meant what they said, because they were the chairmen of all of the important committees. And when they came back from there they told me what they'd said, and I think that my memory is correct when I say that the following morning, Wednesday morning, the Washington papers and other papers across America had a big headline--at least the Washington papers--that the whole agricultural counsel, a whole group of them had been fired: Jerome Frank and Lee Pressman and others.

By that time, of course, Alger Hiss--he had been assigned to us for the first job he had, but he had previously, before this came up, been transferred over to some other department--Mrs. Roosevelt had taken care of him, putting him somewhere else. But Jerome Frank and Lee Pressman, who was assistant solicitor--and Lee Pressman immediately went with the CIO as their legal advisor, general counsel, stayed there several years and was fired from them finally and then ultimately, as I said a while ago, admitted under oath to the HUAC that he was a communist when he was fired out of Agriculture. Which I think is, so far as I'm concerned, complete proof that what we were suspicious of all the time on this particular ruling was the work of the Communist Party. I make no bones about it, have no reservations on that.

Unfortunately, most of these senators--in fact, all those senators are dead. Congressman Fulmer is dead. E. D. White of Arkansas is still living and still in government service, I guess. The only thing he can testify to, however, is that he did go up to these two men with me and that I asked him to get to Arkansas as fast as he could.

Immediately then, I didn't realize the situation regarding Chester Davis and the detail I don't know, but shortly afterwards I learned that the radical group were after him. Chester was too conservative for that group and they wanted him fired, the director of the whole thing. Well, instead of the Secretary firing him they sent him to Europe and before he got back they appointed him as director of the Federal Reserve Board representing agriculture. Tolley, I think, stepped up to that job then.

Baum: The AAA collapsed in 1936, didn't it? Temporarily?

Camp: Yes. There was a Supreme Court ruling that knocked some of it out as unconstitutional. The detail of that I'd better not try to give you because it's history, it's recorded somewhere, and I can't give you all of that.

COTTON IN CALIFORNIA - BREEDING AND VARIETIES
(April 1, 1963 - morning session)

Committee System to Judge New Cotton Varieties and Strains

Baum: In our previous interviews you were discussing a new variety of cotton you were working on in 1928, before you left the Experiment Station.

Camp: Strain, not a variety. Acala was the variety, named after the little town in Mexico where the first seed came from. Pima is another variety. Egyptian cotton was brought over to the U. S. and tested and a lot of work done over at Sacaton, Arizona, at the U. S. Experiment Station, and it so happens that C. J. King, who is the father of one of our daughters-in-law, was in charge of that work. The Sacaton Experiment Station was located in the Pima Indian Reservation so they gave that variety of cotton the name of Pima.

Baum: So a strain is just a further development--.

Camp: --within a variety.

Baum: And the one-variety law limits you to Acala cotton but not necessarily to a particular strain of it.

Camp: That is correct, and that is the thing that so many people try, purposely I think, the agitators try to (many honest people do confuse it, but others who try to break the law purposely) confuse the issue, by saying you can't improve. The intention of the law itself is that further development, further improvement--and every year, every year, both the University of California Agricultural Department Experiment Station and the federal Department of Agriculture workers get the leading varieties from all over America--I mean by leading varieties the ones that are doing well in some other places--and bring them into California and test them,

Camp: under conditions that they think are the best way of testing different varieties; duplicating and replicating in many areas of the state.

But the law is so written that if and as and when they find another variety, as a variety, that is definitely superior to any of the strains of Acala cotton, then it is not permissive, it's mandatory, that everybody change, upon the recommendation of the state and federal experiment stations, but only if this citizens' committee of growers and industry people so determine. On that committee they have University of California and State Department of Agriculture people, you have county agents, cotton and oil mill people and many growers--they determine after they themselves as a committee have seen all these plantings, plus reading all the records of them and so on. This industry committee gives their stamp of approval or disapproval to the recommendation for the change.

Baum: They make the final yes or no.

Camp: Based upon facts. That's the safest way for the plant breeders. We established that kind of system way back when we wrote the one-variety law, and we had that system in effect even before the law was written. As a matter of fact, I was a breeder at the Shasta Experiment Station and I refused to make a recommendation that would be mandatory without this committee giving their approval.

Baum: Is this committee part of the one-variety law?

Camp: No. It's an advisory committee. But in the one-variety law--I don't know if it refers to an advisory committee; I doubt if it does--any breeder or experiment station man who took it upon himself to say on his own, even though he was right, he'd be most foolish to insist on putting it into effect without the approval of an overall committee.

Baum: Is this a formal committee?

Camp: Oh yes--well, it's not a legal committee.

Baum: Does it have a name?

Camp: Well, that's a good question. Originally they were selected by a group that got together and wrote the one-variety law, and then set up a cotton seed organization to handle the one-variety seed, so no grower would make a profit as such on growing seed for the growers. Then out of that type of group--

Camp: the Farm Bureau was represented, the Grange was represented, all agriculturally interested bodies were represented--well, for me to sit here and tell you exactly how each and every member of that committee was selected, I'm not sure because I have no memory of it all. However, I do know that much care was given to the selection of committeemen.

It so happens that our son Don is chairman of the advisory committee now and has been for several years; this group elected him chairman of it after they were organized into a cotton research advisory committee, I believe that's what they call it.

Baum: Do they have regular meetings?

Camp: Oh yes, several times a year. Not just in the office either. Their best work is done when they meet out in these fields where the cotton plots are, and view them from time to time, watch it growing--they've got to study it, what their judgment is about machines picking it, and how early it is and all that. No final determination is made by the breeder until he lays all his facts before this committee; and they have already in the meantime viewed it themselves. Do I make myself clear?

Baum: This committee was in operation when you introduced Acala and decided on it as the one variety for California? Was this the committee that made that decision? Along with your recommendation, I assume.

Camp: I guess in trying to answer that I'd have to step back and say again the why of my coming to California and why cotton was first tested in the San Joaquin Valley.

Baum: You said you came for war purposes; the war needed a long-staple cotton.

Camp: Yes. There was no committee in existence then because nobody here knew very much about cotton. The committee system actually was kind of like Topsy, it just grew. It was one of those things that we folks who wanted to do the thing the best and the quickest way and so on, felt that the safest way of doing it was to lay all the facts on the table before these qualified growers and industry people, and let them help determine, after the war was over and we no longer needed to grow the Egyptian cotton, which was to be the cotton that was best. There were many varieties that we were testing out and several of them were very promising, but over a period of the records that we'd had from the beginning, the first year we planted it, Acala stood head and shoulders above everything else, and it was just a simple matter for anybody brought in on the committee to see--it was just too plain.

Camp: We had some opposition from people who would come in, I remember one fellow, Bob Hulme, who came in from Memphis, Tennessee, from oil mill work there, wanted to bring short staple cotton from that area and he wanted to get Mebane cotton from Texas, very short staple but early maturing. But he was not a cotton grower and never had been, he was just a processor, but he thought he'd come here and put that idea over. Well, we had been testing that variety along with thirty-odd other varieties all the time, so we had all the records--or at least records that were developed in California. He was bringing his experience from back southeast. So Farm Bureau people, county agents, the experiment stations and all of them realized quickly that Acala was at that time the best promise for us.

Baum: Are some cottons better for oil?

Camp: Yes, that's true. Mr. Hulme was interested only in getting seed for his oil mill. We were interested in which cotton would produce the most net profit for the grower!

Mrs.

Camp: Before you answer that, though, in answer to Mrs. Baum's question on how the advisory committee was formed--who formed it and how they were elected--actually those things were all done originally by you as head of the Experiment Station, were they not? Because you didn't want the full responsibility without others being in on it to confirm a lot of your thinking.

Camp: I would be most foolish to state that I did that whole--.

Mrs.

Camp: Well, but it was from your recommendations that all these committees and organizations were formed.

Camp: I merely supplied an idea, a germ, in broad form, and each and every one of the folks who sat with me had ideas, and it grew from that. I don't want to be on record anywhere exclaiming that I did the whole thing.

Development and Loss of a New Strain of Acala Cotton

Baum: Yes, let's go back to the strain you were developing in about 1928.

Camp: It had been perfected to the point where in 1927 the committee and I determined that we did have a strain that was ready to--not replace Acala, because it was an Acala strain, but we liked it because it was so much earlier in maturing, at least ten days, and under certain conditions probably two weeks, and that means lots of money sometimes, particularly those falls when you have early rains and early fogs in the valley, early maturing can make the difference between profit and loss. It was enthusiastically accepted by the committee.

There was one article on it written by Harold L. Pomeroy which appeared all over the states--he had been agricultural commissioner of Kern County, and as such he was a member of the committee while he was in that job. Then he became manager of the seed organization, and in that capacity it was his job to keep an eagle eye out for everything, and he did. He saw all the tests and he had enough facts that he developed the story, published it, announcing to the world that a new strain of Acala cotton was to be put on the market, and he gave the results of it up to that time. Several hundred acres of it had been planted that year, and in 1928 he wrote a long article including that year's results too. It was an earlier cotton, it was a nice long staple--an inch and an eighth was what we were heading for, and some of it went a little more than an inch and an eighth to an inch and three sixteenths.

In November '28 I left the Experiment Station and went with the Bank of America, and naturally I did not know--. Anyway, I will not say a lot about why, but I did not know that they had not used that strain until two or three years later, when I moved to Fresno. Dr. Barr, who was in charge of plant breeding for the U. S. Department of Agriculture at that time--I'm getting a little ahead of my story.

In 1933, while I was with Bank of America, I was persuaded to join the Agricultural Adjustment Administration in Washington as Assistant Chief of the Cotton Section; later, Assistant Director of all crops in seventeen southern states, and cotton in all the U.S. Also in 1933 the Secretary of Agriculture talked to me about heading up the national cotton breeding program, including California and all the other states. I declined it; I was already with the Triple A. Nevertheless, in 1934 I was offered the job of chief of the Cotton Breeding Office, U.S.D.A. They had fired the man who had previously held this office. That's one good thing the New Deal did.

Baum: This was Dr. O. F. Cook?

Camp: Yes. Anyhow, I didn't want the job, and I didn't accept it. I would have accepted it some years earlier, but I had now decided there was something else I wanted to do. And I was in charge of cotton then, I was assistant director of all the cotton program in the U.S.--the Triple A, not the cotton-breeding program. I knew I wasn't going to stay there long, I was going to get back into commercial work. I recommended Dr. Barr, who was dean of the College of Agriculture at Clemson, had been my professor. He accepted the job and went to Washington.

And then in 1942 he himself told me, "Well, Bill,"--I was out here farming then, but I was on committees and I went back to Washington, and in his office in the presence of some others he said, "Bill, we made a terrible mistake when you left the Experiment Station." They made a terrible mistake because Barr wasn't in charge when the dastardly deed was committed. But they did change the strain--to a much shorter one, and it was a terrible mistake. "We've been frantically, for two or three years now, trying to get back to good cotton."

Dr. Barr had been working ever since, and they developed another good cotton finally. It didn't go on the market until several years later, but they did get one. It's now being used and improved every year. John Turner, who's in charge of the Shafter Experiment Station today for the government, does the same work that I did, and has another new strain of Acala that he says is excellent, it'll be ready to put on the market in a year or so.

Baum: Acala 442 is the one they brought out in 1948.

Camp: That's right.

Baum: What happened to the strain you had developed?

Camp: They completely destroyed or sent to the oil mill all the seed, immediately.

Comments on Experiment Station Work

Camp: They couldn't understand why I didn't take the job in cotton breeding.

Baum: You were already in government work then.

Camp: Yes. They didn't know what our ideas were for the future, I guess, because for a man who is a scientist, this was the challenge of a lifetime. But I weighed all this and discovered there were other things that I also wished to do.

Baum: I can't understand how they can keep men on an experiment station when they can make a better living elsewhere.

Camp: Dedicated men, dedicated men. Listen, until I left the Experiment Station, three nights straight we talked until nearly midnight before I could persuade my conscience to quit the very fascinating work I was dedicated to and doing, and undertake what I thought would be a whole new life with the Bank of America. But I changed, and then I did get a little broader view of some things, and when they asked me to leave that and come to Washington in the early New Deal, I had some more ideas.

Mrs.

Camp: [With asperity] His dedication is why he gave his patent to the government instead of keeping it himself. He felt like he owed it all to them.

Camp: [Chuckles] Yes, well--.

But the man who's down there now where I was, all of his life he's devoted to what he's doing. He's the best man that has ever been there. From a breeding standpoint, you've got to be more than a breeder in order to do some of these things, and from the breeding standpoint he's far better than I ever was. He's got further training in it.

Baum: When you started you had an A.B.

Camp: Mine was a B.S.

Baum: Dean Claude Hutchison told us that back in the old days everyone had an A.B. and that was all.

Camp: Yes, that's right. We had some doctor's degrees but they were given to us. During the late twenties I did a bit of graduate study here at the University of California for work on a doctor's degree. They assigned me some agricultural bulletins that I had written to read, and I said, "If that's what I've got to study in order to go further, why..." [Laughter] That was in Berkeley. I was wrong, a little bit, because they assigned that to everyone. But that was the reaction I had.

Camp: John Turner's got a master's degree, pretty nearly his doctorate, I guess. He's from Georgia. He has a big staff; I did it all alone. He has eighteen or twenty on his staff.

Baum: Only on cotton, or on other crops?

Camp: Different phases of cotton. Breeding is one thing; three or four of them are working strictly on that. And others on other phases: weed control, defoliation, cultivation by flame, all kinds of things. They're breeding out of this cotton now, which we didn't try to do, they're breeding out of the seed, a substance that is poisonous to hogs and chickens. Within another ten years I think there'll be no cotton seed grown that is poisonous to chickens or hogs. That'll broaden the market for cotton seed. There's another one; all cotton leaves, prior to now, on the underside had lots of hairs, and trash will catch on it and so on. They've got one developed now that has a smooth leaf, but they've got to add to that smooth leaf some of the characteristics of the good cotton and good seed that was lost in breeding for the smooth leaf. They've got two or three men working on each phase of it.

My job was in developing a cotton, for war purposes and then for the state of California. But cotton and cotton seed now have so many competitors--synthetic fibers and so on. We're in terrible shape competitively. All they're trying to do is produce cotton fiber cheaper and better so as to compete with the other fibers, man-made fibers.

Baum: Are processors competitive in what kind of cotton they want you to raise for, say, the oil?

Camp: There are some cottons they tried to get us to grow some years ago and they still bring up at oil mill meetings now and then; it has very little fiber on it. The boll contains mostly black seed with just enough fiber to hold that seed together. It'll blossom, mature, and not much fiber is produced. Well, obviously that's no good from the standpoint of a man who's making money growing cotton. But if an oil mill can develop one that has enough seed just to produce oil and meal, why, dandy.

Baum: To be economical that cotton would have to produce enough oil to offset the loss of profit from the fiber.

Camp: That's right. All those things are going on all the time. You'd be surprised.

Baum: Is there a great demand for cottonseed oil?

Camp: Normally yes, though right now it's a drag on the market. If they can develop one they can grow a lot cheaper they can sell it a lot cheaper, and maybe it wouldn't be a surplus. It might displace something else, lard, for instance. It almost has already.

More on the Passage of California's One-Variety Law

Baum: When you got your one-variety cottonseed law, then you set up the California Cotton Planting Seed Distributors?

Camp: Immediately afterwards. In order to have the one-variety seed handled properly we had to have an organization, for the mechanics of it. The committee worked it into shape and made it better and we wrote the rules and regulations, constitution, by-laws, in 1925, and precisely the same rules and regulations are followed today--they have been perfected, but the basic principle is exactly the same now as it was then.

Baum: This was organized by the same group that lobbied through the law?

Camp: Yes. We didn't have to do much lobbying. We had determined the facts ahead of time and wrote it out into a bill. When it got into the legislature there was almost no opposition, really. It was unanimous on the final vote.

Baum: Do you remember who some of the people were who worked with you?

Camp: Oh yes. Stanley Pratt, who's dead now. He was an oil mill and gin man, and he organized the San Joaquin Cotton Oil Company in Bakersfield, which now is owned by Anderson Clayton. When he sold that out he came to Fresno and organized the Producers Cotton Oil Company and it so happened just by coincidence that when he came up there to talk to the Bank of America--it was still Bank of Italy then--some few months before that the bank had persuaded me to go with them and I sat in on the first conference he had to borrow money to build the Producers Cotton Oil Company. Having known his background and all the fine co-operation he had given us, the Bank was very

Camp: happy to let him have the money. Also, Charley Barlow, who at one time was a congressman and I believe was a state senator; he was quite a fine man, a farmer in Bakersfield, an oil man and a civic-minded fellow. And Mr. Jastro, who was manager of the Kern County Land Company. He helped in lending his support and approving everything that we in our committee did. His prestige was such that few of those people--his recommendations went a long way.

Also Mr. Arthur Crites, who was a banker in Bakersfield. All three of these people are dead. Parker Frisselle at Fresno, who was general superintendent of Kearney Vineyards--which at that time was owned by the University of California. Parker co-operated with me on everything from the beginning; we became very close friends.

The Professor, J. W. Gilmore, in his capacity as head of the agronomy division at U.C.--not that he lobbied or did anything like that, but he gave it his blessings, and so did the dean, it might have been Dr. Merrill, or Dr. Hunt, in 1925. Whoever it was gave his blessings. Every official at the University of California in agriculture sat in on many of the conferences, and when the final recommendations were given it was completely unanimous from the University. All of which was very helpful, and of course it made me very happy because the day before I left Washington in 1917, some of the U.S.D.A. officials said I couldn't be expected to win University of California co-operation.

Now, from the growers' standpoint again, going back to Kern County, Mr. Hugh S. Jewett, as a grower, was very helpful and in fact probably one of the things that led to that one-variety law as quickly as it came. He invited me to make a speech before the Rotary Club and I presented the facts about the different varieties and why you shouldn't have many of them, that they would mix up just as far as bees would fly, and that I had evidence of a seven-miles' flight crossing some Egyptian with another variety. Anyway, that led into a lot of other meetings. Mr. Jewett was the first president of the seed organization. Stanley Pratt was a director of it.

Oh, Hal Woodworth, H. E. Woodworth. Mr. E. G. Buerk was president of the Farm Bureau down there. And Louie Burtch, L. A. Burtch, I mustn't forget him. Mr. Harry Thompson. That's enough, isn't it?

Oh, the San Joaquin Power and Light Company, Mr. Emory

Camp: Wishon, who was president of it at the time, and his father, who was still living, were very helpful. He assigned one of his men to me, Mr. Carroll, I believe it was, and we traveled the West together quite a bit; I wanted them to see for themselves the story that I was, you might say, developing, and all the information I wanted them to see first-hand.

And H. H. Clarke, who was in charge of all the farms in the Imperial Valley and on the Mexico side, for the Chandler interests--Harry Chandler of the L. A. Times. We sold the idea to them, and Mr. Harry Chandler himself was very co-operative with me. Even though both he and Mr. Jastro were elderly gentlemen and I was a youngster they passed the word along and called in others to work with us. We just went through.

Baum: All these men worked on passing the law and founding the cotton-seed organization?

Camp: Many meetings were held all over to discuss different phases of the thing and the possible future of cotton, the ifs, ands or buts all along the line. Not many people in California knew much about cotton and they relied on some of us rather heavily, so to make sure they knew the facts were being given to them is why we took a lot of them with us to demonstrations.

Baum: Did you do most of the behind-the-scenes arranging and so on?

Camp: Well, I'd hate to put it that way. I did all I could.

Mrs.

Camp: He did; he did all the initial thinking.

Camp: I would put it this way: folks like Parker Frisselle, Stanley Pratt, Mr. Jastro--all these people I've mentioned, including University people--every single recommendation that I would make to them, in positive form, they accepted and helped me. But, they had been given all the facts and had either seen themselves or enough other people had seen it to convince them that these were the facts. There was no propaganda or--you wouldn't call it promotional, but there was no high-powered stuff going on.

Parker Frisselle and the power company and Stanley Pratt, and Anderson Clayton Cotton Oil Company, who weren't out here yet, to begin with, but then came--and so did McFadden Brothers Cotton Company, which was originally the biggest cotton outfit

Camp: Cotton Company, which was originally the biggest cotton outfit in the world, which Anderson Clayton later became, and their top men were also brought in on all of this and they wholeheartedly put their energies and their money into it and helped put it through. It was an industry-wide thing, and to say that any one man did it would be certainly not the facts.

Normally it might seem that we would have had a difficult time, requiring several years, convincing all the growers that we had another single variety that would be best for all. I'm sure this would have been true if these people had been growing cotton for a long time. However, from the very beginning, when we planted the first experiments all over the state, and especially in the San Joaquin Valley, we made it our job to see that farmers and all agricultural officials in the different counties saw and understood what we were doing and why. This proved to be our best argument when we recommended the change.

Before we started the cotton experiment station at Shafter I had a small group of people who were keenly interested in all our cotton experiments. They co-operated with us and acted as my unofficial advisors. They helped me appraise all matters pertaining to cotton and the local growers.

After the Shafter Station was established and the first plantings were made, in 1925, a larger and more formal advisory committee was established including representatives from the U.S.D.A., the University, State Department of Agriculture, county agencies, growers, processors, buyers and textile mills.

I believe this type committee is still very much a part of the cotton one-variety program in California today. Of course, with many up-to-date refinements.

Growing, Ginning, and Distribution of Seed Cotton

Baum: How was the cotton seed distribution to work--you were going to produce the seed first?

Camp: The theory was, and they're still operating on the same basis, that we wanted the seed that was developed at the experiment stations made available to all growers as quickly as possible, and we wanted it done so that all growers, the industry-wide group, would know that nobody was getting in and setting up a racket of some kind selling seed or profiteering on some scientific work being done by the state or federal experiment stations.

The idea was that we have a group who would control, you might say own, to all practical effects, all of the pure seed that was produced. That committee, working with the breeders--the breeders would select growers who had land that was clean, that was isolated, that was productive, and would do a good job of farming, and there would be clean gins, no mixing with any previous strain; then this field of pure seed that was grown out here by John Smith or John Doe would go into a warehouse under the name of--maybe John Smith's name would still be on it until it was paid for, but the seed organization was to determine where it went. If there was enough to go to everybody the first year they'd send it out to everybody; the grower who grew it would be paid oil mill price for it immediately, the same as all other growers. Then ultimately, when the seed was distributed, the organization would see to it that this grower would be paid enough more to make up for his additional cost of keeping it clean. But nobody was to make money as a seed grower, except all growers would profit because of better and uniform lint. I'll tell you later about some efforts that private seed growers have tried, and are still trying, to make money.

Baum: How was this financed? How did the seed organization have the money to pay the grower?

Camp: Well, the first year there was very little seed, so some of

Camp: these growers and oil mill people went to the bank and signed a note to guarantee the money. They were taking a chance, but they had faith, and they did it. That obviously couldn't go on except as a starter.

So we worked out a plan to co-operate with the gins. All growers had to operate through a cotton gin in their neighborhood, so we worked out a plan that the gins would work with the seed organization to help pick out these growers with clean land and so on, and as time went on the gins themselves became a part of the organization--not in the breeding but in the mechanics of it, and therefore they became a part in the financing of it and ultimately the organization set up a kitty and had a little bit go into the kitty each year, so they now can go to the bank and borrow all the money they need. It's the simplest working thing you've ever known in any co-op; it's a non-profit organization. We've worked for many years with just one man in the California Cotton Planting Seed Distributors, because the gins did the work with the growers.

Baum: Did all the gins gin the cotton seed or did you have to use one particular gin?

Camp: We worked out a system of cleaning up the gins; that was one of the initial things, and a gin that was going to gin pure seed would have to be stopped to clean it completely, sweeping the ceiling, sweeping everything, getting every possible seed and cobweb out. They still do that, just as religiously as we did thirty years ago, even though there's not nearly the same reason for doing it now. But the psychology is wonderful. And there could be a slipup sometime and some of these new strains that over a period of years are so good might for some reason or other--they haven't yet, but they might--backfire. Particularly when they're putting so many different kinds of blood into them. And they still make sure the field they get to grow the seed is clean, isolated by a certain distance from other commercial fields. They're hard to find sometimes.

Baum: Seven miles? [Laughing]

Camp: No, not with the same variety, we don't care, but it's got to be a little ways off. It's a very ticklish job, but it works beautifully. The only objection is that private breeders, Mississippi or somewhere--thereby hangs another story.

Baum: You have mentioned private breeders who objected to a one-variety law in their state because they thought it would interfere.

Baum: I read that in 1936 the Department of Agriculture asked the Kern County Farm Bureau to distribute seed on a co-operative basis, and that the distribution then slipped out of the Farm Bureau's hands into the California Cotton Planting Seed Distributors.

Camp: Well, there was a little feud down in Kern County for three or four years; personalities were involved, that's all. The first year we were doing things temporarily under the auspices of the Farm Bureau just because it sounded good, it was good, and it went so well that lo and behold, a very good friend of mine, who became president of the Farm Bureau, looked upon it as a good deal and thought that the Farm Bureau by itself should have the whole thing. And yet I'm very fond of the Farm Bureau and the man who was leading the fight. He's a very fine man.

Baum: This has been interpreted that some growers were making a big profit.

Camp: That's right, and he made a personal issue of it and accused some of the men who were on the board of the distributors' organization of making a great profit out of it. And maybe some grower did. If he did it was only because he had good clean land that it didn't cost him much to keep in the shape that the organization wanted. But it had cost him money to get it in that shape prior to that, I'll guarantee you. But the average of the cotton growers--they don't make any extra money on it; the distributors have asked us for several years to grow seed for them. Our sons and I just the other day reviewed the thing to see which way we could make the most money out of it. We'll grow seed on any field, but we now think we know that we'd be better off if we were out from under it entirely as seed growers, because our outlet for crushing purposes at the present time--you don't deliver all the seed to the seed organization, just up to a certain point, and the balance of it you sell to the oil mill. Well, it so happens that the balance of our seed now is paying us a little more.

Any grower with any sense, if he knows what he's getting into, will not seek them out and say, "Please, may I grow some of it?" But on the other hand all good growers who are interested in the well being of the industry will go along and do the best they can in growing something, because it's maybe yes, maybe no, make a little more or a little less, but it's one or two dollars more that you can make so that you'll know you aren't being penalized.

Baum: This was the Depression in 1936, and maybe a sure market was--.

Camp: I wasn't in cotton that year so I really don't know what prompted them to get into that bitter dispute. But one of the reasons was a woman down there who is dead now, but she was quite often an agitator. She didn't have many friends-- I was a good friend of hers and yet she castigated me and put me in the communist paper many times and on the radio, but I never believed that she meant what she was trying to say and do. I thought she was a little unbalanced, and when she was finally in the hospital, even though she'd done all that, I was the only one who visited her in her last six weeks for any time at all. She was behind all of that agitation. She was very liberal-minded sometimes, but I don't think she realized what she was doing. She just liked to agitate.

Baum: So you think there's no validity to this point that some growers were monopolizing the growing of seed?

Camp: I don't want to think so, and I know that if it were so--I doubt if it were so. I doubt if they themselves wanted to grow the seed, just as we today are growing a little and will continue if they come to us and seek us out, but we'll not go to them and ask to be designated a seed grower. I think that's the attitude of all the better growers.

Baum: The other criticism I read was that in 1948 when they developed the Acala 442, the first year they had a limited amount of seed and certain of the more favored growers got the seed and a lot of others didn't, and they felt that it was the large growers who got the seed and the small growers were kind of shuffled out.

Camp: Well, I doubt it, but I'm not personally familiar with it if it did. All I can say is that I don't know any grower who wants to grow the seed just for the sake of growing the seed.

Baum: This was to get the seed in order to produce the crop.

Camp: Well, you know it works both ways. Sometimes those strains-- and you don't hear them say much about that--go exactly the opposite direction. Even though you just know this is the best strain and it has proven so, all of a sudden you may have something that's better or this may not be as good as you thought it was, and you'd wish you'd stayed with the other.

Baum: Then you're taking a chance the first year with a new strain.

Camp: Always, always. Of course, the evidence is overwhelmingly on the side of it really being better, though it isn't always.

Baum: How long does it take usually from the time they decide on a new strain to the time when there is sufficient seed for all growers?

Camp: That depends on the weather and a lot of things, but usually three to four years. You can't do it in one year and you can't do it in two years. Three years after they've really decided on it. But when they think they've decided on it they go a little slowly, cautiously.

Baum: It's too bad the cotton strain you developed was entirely lost.

Camp: The strain that was developed and written about would have meant many millions of dollars to the industry. Fortunately, the price of cotton was high enough during all that time that they didn't lose much money on any of the other cotton that was substituted. But along in 1937, '8 and '9, and 1940, the price of cotton was mighty low, and had that strain been there--it was very early, with a long fiber, and very productive--it would have meant a lot of money to growers. That is conjecture, though. I may be entirely wrong.

Baum: Harold Pomeroy was manager of the seed distributing organization. Is he still living?

Camp: Oh yes, a very fine fellow.

Baum: He had been agricultural commissioner of Kern County?

Camp: He was one of the inspectors in the agricultural commissioner's office in Kern County beginning about 1918--I believe a year after I came to California. Anyhow, he worked in that capacity for a few years and then by somebody else resigning and so on he was promoted, was appointed as agricultural commissioner of Kern County and was for a number of years, until they got him to take this job as manager of the seed organization, beginning in 1925. He operated it for many years. Then Larry Nourse took over, until last month; he's now the advisor and his assistant, Jack Hurd, was just recently made manager.

Recent Efforts to Revise the One-Variety Law

Camp: Larry Nourse called me this morning frantically wanting to

Camp: make sure that I can be in Sacramento on April 11th. There's a small group who's trying to break the one-variety cotton law with a written bill that's been introduced. We had to rush back from the East in late February to a big meeting to listen and then talk about it. Now it's come up as a bill in Sacramento.

Baum: Why are they trying to break the one-variety law?

Camp: We're getting ahead of our story, but I'll put it in now. The sale of seed for planting means profit to some people in some states and areas. Now, the Delta Pineland Corporation in Mississippi, they're breeders of cotton for that area, and their big income is from the sale of seed. So they've succeeded in getting into the Imperial Valley, because the one-variety law doesn't extend down to cover the Imperial Valley. The climate there is entirely different to the San Joaquin Valley, and percentagewise only a little of our cotton is grown in the Imperial Valley. In fact, for many years they didn't grow anything at all but Delta cotton.

In the Imperial Valley the climate lets them grow cotton right up until Christmas, and sometimes they never even have frost enough to kill the roots, so they can cut off the dead tops and they'll come up from the roots. That produces a very inferior cotton, but you might get a big quantity, and as long as the government is buying and storing, many growers say, Well, who cares? So they have succeeded in getting in down there and the growers in the San Joaquin Valley, where most of our cotton is grown, make no objection to it.

Well, so Delta Pineland have sold the seed and they make a lot of money selling seed. But percentage wise there's only a little grown there, and they want to sell seed to the 93 or 94 per cent of the total state acreage in the San Joaquin Valley. Let's just say if our cottonseed were selling for one hundred dollars a ton, theirs would be selling to the same grower for two hundred dollars--I'm just using round figures. It might be a little less or a little more, but almost double.

They've been able to sell three or four people in Madera County on the idea that they can make money on it. Madera County is in a sense a marginal cotton area--it never has been and never will be as good a cotton county productionwise as Kern County, or King or Tulare. It's just like Merced; it peters out in Merced. There are not enough heat units. So they got over the idea to a few people, two in particular, that they can make a lot of money on it. I'll tell you why they can

Camp: make money on it pretty soon.

So they got their senator from Merced to introduce a bill permitting them to make privately a lot of commercial tests--but not the growers there. They want this company to come in and make the tests. So they had this big meeting, and he made his talk, and it was a very nice talk, very convincing. And then two or three others. Then it came out. They weren't able to sell their cotton down there. One of them got up and said, yes, they had one buyer who bought a third of all their cotton.

Then they called on me. I didn't know anything about that, but you couldn't have picked a spot that I would have like better, because I was able to say to them, and the audience did not know this, and these seed fellers didn't know that I knew it either, I guess; I says, "Well, it's wonderful that you can grow cotton for cotton's sake and at the same time sell the seed to growers in other areas for planting purposes. Also it's fine you can bring along your own buyer to buy some of this cotton, otherwise all of it is going in government loan, "but," I said, "this happens to be a Canadian buyer you are talking about and Canadians happen to be tied to Britain, and this company in Mississippi, these folks sitting here, at your head table, who are trying to stampede you into this thing, are on the payroll of this company from Mississippi, which is a 100 per cent owned and operated British corporation."

Well, they didn't even reply to that in any way, because how could they?

Then afterwards two growers from Imperial Valley came up here and tried to sell Madera County; one of their names was Elmore, and he was the chief talker.

I said, "I've got a sister-in-law whose name was Elmore, married my brother." And I says, "Well now, what is your chief interest?"

"Well," he said, "frankly, I'm to be agent of all the seed."

I said, "Well, I knew there was something. You're not telling me anything that I wasn't suspecting."

And then I was talking to these other two fellows from the local county who were so interested, and I approached it in a similar manner and had no difficulty whatever finding out

Camp: that they were going to be the agents in their county. Well, you know, money.

Baum: It just sounds like such a ridiculous idea that I can't see how they could sell anybody but the people who would be agents.

Camp: Well, they're young--the local ones are young. Elmore is not young by any means. But he had young ideas insofar as the San Joaquin Valley was concerned. But I didn't hesitate to bury him quickly. So it's coming up over yonder and you never know. I had to make a speech once, a long time ago, until midnight before the senate, and at two o'clock they brought in their judgment. Now as far as who was trying to get that one changed, it was one of the young fellows who was a close associate of the man I told you about, Cook. Wheels within wheels.

Baum: Are there some growers that are not satisfied with the one-variety law?

Camp: No, no. I've told you the basis of it, the agitation, the stampede these people are trying to put on. Always there are some people ready to listen, and they're about to stampede them by saying that they themselves as breeders have never been allowed to make these tests themselves. Well, we want the tests made by completely non-partisan public agencies, whether it be the University Extension or federal experiment stations--or both, because they work just as closely as they can work, now.

Most of the money that is spent by the University of California on cotton, most of it, is put up by the seed organization, the cotton growers pay for it; but they're an unbiased public agency. Every year they take this Pineland seed and test it with the others, all over the state, and it never has come out on top. Acala has come out on top every time. I would be a fool as a grower not to want the best one there is that I can make the most money on over a long time, not in any one year but for a long time. These fellows have been making the tests, we want them to continue making the tests, and if any variety turns out better this committee and the breeders and so on gives consideration.

Baum: Doesn't the Department of Agriculture run tests on cotton seed in other states than California?

Camp: Oh yes, every year.

Baum: I can't see the role of a private cotton breeder--.

Camp: No one who's sensible and looks the thing straight in the face can either, but if you were an agent for a potential sale of seed, you are going to be prejudiced.

Baum: I can see why they might hire a private company to grow the seed, but not the experimenting.

Camp: The federal experiment station, John Turner, and the University people say, sure, Mr. Seed-breeder, come on in and watch your seed. As a matter of fact, you tell the grower how to grow it. But we're the ones who are going to harvest it and weigh it and put the facts out to the public. We're not going to leave it to any private individual, including the grower himself. And that's all.

But many people are greedy, all over the world, and seed breeders are no exception.

Baum: If you didn't have the one-variety law and the close supervision of seed, why wouldn't a grower simply get his own seed back from the mill after ginning?

Camp: Well, if you don't have supervision, if you don't have the gins being cleaned out and kept watched, ultimately you're going to have a lot of mixups because there will be inbreeding and crossbreeding; you bring your seed back and plant it year after year, ultimately there's going to be some bad stuff.

Baum: There will be deterioration.

Camp: That's right. So no one could profit by doing that because he can buy the best seed there is at the same price he sells his to the oil mill. He has to pay the extra cost, a little more than he gets cash, but if he paid for the hauling back and the storage and the sacks, for his own seed--that's what he pays for the seed from the seed organization.

Baum: But not from a private breeder.

Camp: No, no. The private fellow makes it nearly double. In fact in many cases several times as much. That's the secret of the whole thing. It had worked that way from the beginning of time in California, but in 1925 the law went into effect, and there wasn't much cotton prior to that anyway. No one who understands fully would think of going back.

Baum: I don't think you'll have to worry much about that law in Sacramento, with politicians who know anything about cotton.

Mrs.

Camp: Well, they don't.

Camp: On the other hand, some of those politicians know that I'm a Democrat but that I'm voting my own conscience no matter what the legislation is. Just like I told John Watson, he and I are friends but he believes in the liberal end of the California Democratic party and I don't believe in doing away with the HUAC. John Watson's chairman of the State Agricultural Committee.

Baum: He used to be president of the State Chamber of Commerce?

Camp: That's right. He spent several nights in my home and his philosophy and mine at that time were precisely the same, but mine has stayed the same.

Baum: I guess we ought to break for lunch.

Camp: (To his wife) Maybe you'll have your dress made by that time. (During most of these sessions Mrs. Camp sat nearby and crocheted on a silk ribbon dress. During the course of the interviews she completed two dresses. WKB)

Mrs.

Camp: I will, I'm sure.

Camp: I wanted her to have that dress made so she could wear it to a very fine party in Washington one month from today.



Office, W.B. Camp & Sons, Inc. Mr. W.B. Camp and secretary Johnnie Pell, June Clegg, bookkeeper, Emory Hanson, Seed Potato fieldman. Standing, Bill Camp, Jr. and Don Camp. Mrs. Mary Daniel, bookkeeper. 1947.



Aerial view of the W.B. Camp & Sons, Inc. office and cotton gin and employees homes. Kern County, near Bakersfield, California.

COTTON IN CALIFORNIA--ASSOCIATIONS OF GROWERS
(April 1, 1963--Afternoon session)

California Cotton Co-operative Association (Cal Cotton) and
and Early Growers' Associations

Baum: Well, shall we get into associations of cotton farmers?

Camp: Yes. [Looking at scrapbook] I believe that I have some copies of some old photographs taken way back in '24, '5, '6, and '7--one was called the California Cotton Growers Association, I think. I believe they asked me to serve as secretary. It was a picture of the prime movers in this whole thing. H. H. Clarke and some of them.

I just happened to turn here [still referring to scrapbook] and it shows the new directors of the California Cotton Co-operative Association, October 1929.

Mrs.

Camp: They wanted you to serve as president and you wouldn't.

Camp: I have declined almost every offer of presidency that's come my way. I have no desire...I've always felt that, usually, I can do more good in another position than I can as president.

Baum: Well, I see you're usually on the board or somewhere near the top. That was the California Cotton Co-operative Association.

Camp: Yes, that's what it was called then. That is the real predecessor of Cal-Cot, as it's known today.

Baum: I have some notes that that was founded in 1927.

Camp: Well, you're right.

I don't know what names you've got in your notes; Green, maybe, and maybe Arthur Swain, maybe Buerkle; I was in all of the early groups, had something to do with all of them. They were all effective, but on this date (October, 1929) they

Camp: reshuffled (or reorganized) the whole thing. It was planned by a very smart little fellow from Texas from the American Cotton Co-op Association, who came out here and attended this meeting for a couple of days. His name was C. O. Moser. He had a candidate he wished to be the manager of it. Well, we surprised him; we didn't accept it. I was with the bank at that particular time, but I allowed myself to go on the board officially, and three of us were asked to serve as a committee to select a manager, and of these three they asked me to serve as chairman, and I did. L. W. Frick, L. W. Symmes and I; Guiberson, president of the First National Bank of Corcoran, California, served for a little while, and then we elected Guiberson president of the organization so he stepped out of that and Symmes went in. Symmes was manager of the Hoover Farm at that time--L. W. Symmes. [To Mrs. Camp] It was his widow who married L. A. Burtch after Symmes died.

Baum: You mentioned Moser of the American Cotton Co-operative Association--.

Camp: That's right. There were two things he tried to do. He tried to have his man elected manager, and we beat him to the punch. Then we had a little battle, the three of us! (Frick, Symmes and Moser) It seems that each one of us had a candidate; I didn't have a candidate at the time, but they had candidates, and then we compromised on a man I proposed, Mr. C. C. Selden, who was the western cotton manager and buyer for McFadden Brothers, Memphis, the biggest cotton brokers in the world at that time. He turned out to be a very fine choice. Succeeding him was Russell Kennedy, who's there now. It's the same name but for short they call it Cal-Cot.

Baum: When this organization was founded, the California Cotton Co-op Association, what was going to be the function of the organization?

Camp: Excuse me, before I answer that--. The first association was prior to the date you have, and the manager of that was Arthur Swain of Bakersfield. He knew nothing about cotton but he acted as a kind of go-between for the growers. There weren't a lot of growers, but none of them had experience in selling cotton. Several of us advised with Mr. Swain as to just how to do the job. I was in the government service but I served in many advisory capacities. I felt this was a part of my job. Nobody knew cotton out here.

Baum: I got some information somewhere, that in 1920 there was a cotton marketing co-op formed.

Camp: That may be the time that Arthur Swain was the manager. When I say manager, we merely hired him to do the selling.

Baum: It said members were Parker Frisselle, W. G. Ferguson of Firebaugh, and J. P. Benson of Boston Land Company.

Camp: J. P. Benson was county agent in Fresno County, not with the Boston Land Company. The fellow in charge of Boston Land Company at that time was Mr. Stagmire. J. P. Benson's a cotton grower now, and Mr. H. L. Pomeroy, who was president of Western Cotton Growers for several years, which is mostly merely a name for lobbying activities of the oil mills--two years ago he decided he didn't want to be president any more and they elected Benson. That's a lobbying thing in Washington for the oil mills. Benson's a good friend of mine.

You say that was a marketing organization? Listen, in January 1920, and 1919, I had charge of growing the cotton on the Kearney Vineyard, and it did awfully well, and in January of 1920 I sold Pima Egyptian cotton grown there. I sold it myself, for \$1.05 and 1/4 cents a pound. I went right on down to Bakersfield and sold a hundred-and-some bales. It was the same kind of cotton produced by the Kern County Land Company, sold to the same buyers, and theirs sold for \$1.05 a pound. The same buyers--Turner and Coon. I haven't thought of those names in years. But the price of cotton soon went kerflooey. It was shortly after this that they, Parker Frisselle and Ralph Merritt and Herbert Hoover and other associates, had me buy the Hoover Farm at Wasco for them, to grow cotton.

Almost immediately after the land was bought cotton prices broke drastically. I was scheduled to resign from the government and take over the development and management of the farm. Even though I was slated to come into part ownership I elected to stay in my government work.

Mr. Hoover agreed that much of the acreage be planted to fruit and I felt I could best serve by staying with cotton work.

The price of cotton went so low that those fellows who bought that Pima cotton went broke completely. The cotton was shipped to England and back; couldn't sell it over there. Finally it was sold to somebody for less than twelve cents a pound.

Baum: What a terrible loss. I've talked to people who've been in rice, and the rice market broke in the fall of 1922, and the sugar market broke--.

Camp: This gal (Mrs. Camp) can tell you something about the sugar market.

Baum: Were you in sugar--?

Mrs.

Camp: No, but my father was a victim of it.

Camp: The sugar market breaking caused her--she started to college at that time, without a penny, and worked her way through for the next four years. He was in the wholesale business, including sugar, and had many carloads bought on the high market.

Well, so much for that. I'm not too helpful to you on the exact dates and names of those little organizations.

[Mrs. Camp reading from a newspaper clipping of 1920 describing a meeting of the cotton growers organization for mutual benefit...]

Mrs.

Camp: "The committee appointed at the meeting consisted of S. P. Frisselle the manager of the Kearney Farm, W. G. Ferguson of Firebaugh, and J. P. Benson of the Boston Land Company."

Camp: That brings to mind the manager of the Boston Land Company, whose name was Mr. Stagmire. He was manager for a long time. But I'd better back up a little. I was over there at the Boston Land Company often, had lunch with them, Stagmire being manager--and he had a big organization. It's highly possible that Benson as a young man was one of his few men, or something. But Benson was not known to me--at that time. Later Benson became county agent in Fresno, and ever since we've been very close friends. Benson I had in the field with me many many days, many occasions, rogueing cotton, in my pure seed work and so on while he was county agent.

Rogueing is going up and down the rows taking out any plant that isn't like the other plants. It might conceivably be a better plant, but if it isn't like the others we had to get rid of it. I had to do that every year and I had to get a number of people to help me because I had a lot of it to do at first.

Mrs.

Camp: May I add just this part here? It goes on to say that "this organization was suggested to the State Department of Agriculture by representatives of the United States Department of Agriculture.. --who was W. B. Camp at that time, that is by way of placing personalities here--"and by the Fresno County Farm Bureau. To such an organization the Chamber of Commerce at this time bespeaks

Mrs.

Camp: its earnest support." So that orients the situation there.

Baum: Then I have the California Cotton Growers Association, organized in 1924, Camp elected director, H. H. Clarke elected president.

Camp: Now you're coming to the one I told you I had a picture of, and we have stationery with the letterhead. That was to help promote this one-variety. H. H. Clarke was a fine fellow, a great big fellow and a lot of hot air, but his heart was right and he'd fall right in and co-operate with you on all the good things. But he'd get up and make a lot of statements that sometimes just weren't technically correct, but he didn't mean to be incorrect--just enjoyed being looked at and being heard.

Baum: I have a statement that he was an operator of over 100,000 acres of cotton land.

Camp: For the Harry Chandler organization, owners of the Los Angeles Times.

Baum: That's a lot of cotton. I didn't know cotton was even growing in that quantity in 1924.

Camp: Not in California. That was in Mexico. There were a few acres on the California side of the Imperial Valley, but almost all of it was on the Mexican side. I was over there with him several times.

Baum: The main purpose of this association was the one-variety cotton law?

Camp: Well, I would say that the one-variety cotton law was--not an outgrowth of this, but this was one of the last pieces of mechanics that we brought together to help make sure that there'd be no opposition. Right about that same time Harvey Kilburn may have come into the picture there as a director. I'm not sure. It may have been a year later. They hired him to manage the Hoover farm when I stepped aside and said I wouldn't.

He really was not a cotton man. He thought he became one but he didn't. Kilburn was a civil engineer, who learned his agriculture on this farm.

Baum: Why do cotton growers organize? What's their purpose? I can see their doing it for production of seed and for marketing.

Camp: Well, bargaining advantages. An individual grower with a few

Camp: acres is at a disadvantage--and particularly then because nobody knew anything about it. If you had a lot of them all banded together and the buyers come around, they could at least hire somebody who would know the techniques of this thing. And following that, buyers regularly paid premiums for all our good cotton, and they wouldn't have if they could have picked them (the growers) off one by one.

Baum: I have a little note that in 1932 you represented the California Cotton Growers Association at its meeting with the Railroad Commission and that you were requesting lower rates from the San Joaquin Light and Power Company.

Camp: [Laughing] Gosh, I've forgotten it.

Baum: Well, I wondered if this was a function of the California Cotton Growers Association, to speak on such things.

Camp: Yes, all matters that would help the cotton growers. And lower rates on power is certainly one of them. It begins to come back to me now. It was just the same as we've done with the railroads. I remember the president of the Southern Pacific and then the president of the Santa Fe came down to a meeting one time and they got there after we had been around the table, and they said, "We wondered who in the hell this fellow Bill Camp is from Bakersfield who called us and asked us to come down two days for a meeting, wants to lower the freight rate."

Well, we got it. We weren't asking for something we didn't think we deserved and the power companies back there were very co-operative. They saw in cotton a big user of power and there's no question at all in my mind but what they lowered the rate for agriculture and for cotton just as much as they could, because they were hoping to attract it as a big industry, and they helped do it.

Comments on Co-operative Marketing of Cotton

Baum: In June, 1923 the California-Arizona Cotton Organization was formed by merchants. The purpose was to standardize gin weights. Do you remember that?

Camp: Yes. I made a speech to them. That same organization still goes; they may have changed their name a little bit but they have an annual meeting and I got an invitation some weeks ago to their annual meeting. I spoke at one of their meetings a few years after that; the California Department of Agriculture had put through a law to standardize weights and they were going to penalize buyers who didn't live up to their promises and what-have-you. And the State Department of Agriculture man got up in Los Angeles at the annual meeting and he made his speech. I was sitting back in the audience; I was coming on the program later, but I couldn't wait and I said, "I have to talk now to this one, because I will buy this man a nice suit of clothes the first time he has one single complaint by his office against a cotton buyer in California, for having gone back on his word after he agreed to buy cotton--anybody, anywhere, whether it's over the telephone or by wire or by letter."

"Because," I said, "mister, I've got news for you. It just doesn't happen in the cotton trade."

Baum: Is that right?

Camp: That's right. It's still right. The cotton buyer, no matter what his morals are, when he buys a bale of cotton the ethics in that trade are such that he has bought it. I'm not saying there aren't some crooks who pretend to be cotton buyers sometimes, I'm talking about bona fide cotton buyers. Of course, cotton growers should know that they've sold to a legitimate cotton buyer before they sell.

Baum: Was the difficulty in other crops?

Camp: Oh, all fruits, all vegetables. It was notorious.
Mrs.

Camp: Well, one thing is that they're perishable products, and cotton is stable.

Camp: Yes, that's correct. But traditionally cotton buyers, no matter what they are otherwise, if you sell it, it's sold. But they still meet and argue about weight and measures and bale wrappings, storage rates, freight rates.

Baum: Who are the main shippers? These are all the big companies, not individuals.

Camp: No, there are a lot of individual buyers, who buy for themselves and have plants in different places. But they've got to have a pretty good reputation to be that kind of an agent. There are other mills who buy directly and have a man located here to go

Camp: around for them and buy. We sell some of ours directly to mill people, others we sell to agents. We get bids on ours every day we sell. It's all graded and stapled by the U.S.D.A. and everybody knows what each and every bale is, and they're asked to bid their highest price and the highest price gets it. The price of cotton goes up and down almost daily, and we determine whether, when we get them all in, we want to accept any one of them or not, but we never reveal what anyone has offered. Now, that doesn't mean that when you're left to the wolves that they won't come and tell you it's only worth twenty-six cents when it ought to be worth twenty-seven or twenty-eight, if they can buy it for that. They buy as cheap as they can, and that's just competitive private enterprise. But if they know there are other buyers in here they're going to offer every penny they can afford to pay.

Baum: The California Cotton Co-operative Association is an association that markets cotton for individual growers, is that right?

Camp: Yes, they market better than one-fourth of the total grown in the state. Even 25 or 30 per cent is a big percentage for any one organization to handle.

Baum: Did they sell to the American Cotton Co-operative Association?

Camp: The American Cotton Co-operative Association went out of existence. Moser came here and tried to put that over. Shortly afterwards he went with Proctor and Gamble, and at that time I had gone with AAA in charge of cotton in the West. I had this title for only a few days, then I was Assistant Chief of the Cotton Division, U.S.D.A. After several weeks and another reorganization I was Head Agricultural Economist and Assistant Director of all cotton in the U.S., and all crops in the Southern Region (seventeen southern states). Moser tried awfully hard in Washington to hire me to go with Proctor and Gamble. It would have paid a lot more money but I wasn't interested, because I knew I was coming back to California some day--and not too long off. There is no American Cotton Co-operative Association now, no.

When I left Washington to come back here permanently a man in Louisiana was president of the organization in Louisiana, and he tried awfully hard to persuade me to stay with the government, said that the cotton growers over America had recognized that Cully Cobb and I were cotton growers' friends. But I was heading home. There's a cotton growers organization in Georgia, and several others, but they're all local or statewide organizations.

Baum: How does the California Cotton Co-op work on marketing?

Camp: Well, the same way I do, as an individual grower. They get the best bids they can on lots of cotton--I mean in lots--plus some more; these individual members of the co-op, when they gin their cotton it's usually at a co-op gin and all of the cotton ginned there, or at least I assume most of it, automatically the bale certificates find their way into the office of Calcot. There's quite an elaborate setup of bookkeeping, and they get these lots together and there are so many bales of one grade and staple, so many of another, and so many belong to certain people, and they offer different groupings out for bids, by telephone or wire or something else.

Anyway, they notify buyers all over the world what they've got, and they have a cable come in from a buyer in Japan or Germany, "Can you supply us so many bales of so-and-so, grade and staple?" at a certain price, and there's negotiation. It's only a marketing co-op, but there are individual gins, and most if not all their cotton goes into the co-op marketing association automatically. The gins and the organization are not the same, but they co-operate, work together. We own our own gins and we save the overhead we would pay for all the marketing on the part of the co-op, because they do have to be paid.

Baum: Do the members who join the marketing co-op agree to turn their cotton over to the co-op?

Camp: Yes. They have got to have--I don't know what to call it, but the marketing co-op has got to have a direct agreement with these growers. But I think they make it probably almost automatic through the co-op gins. Also there are growers who are not members of any co-op gin but are members of the co-op marketing organization. I am no longer a member but when I went to Washington I automatically lost my membership; when I came back we were producing enough that we thought we didn't need the marketing co-op. But not if we were a 25 or 85 or 125-bale grower.

Mrs.

Camp: The marketing co-op is a big fact in helping the small man market his cotton.

Camp: That's right. I wouldn't want to see a co-op have the entire thing, and I don't think the co-op itself would want it.

Baum: Do the co-ops own the cotton in the field? Is it signed over to them? I think in some of the fruit co-ops from the time it's planted it's contracted to the co-op.

Camp: I think probably the cotton grower would be in the same position,

- Camp: if he's signed up as a member of the co-op. If he were to market his cotton independently and if they wished to, they could prosecute him, so far as I know, but there's never been a case like it. They'd simply write him off as a non-member and that would be that. That's the way I think they'd do it. But it doesn't belong to the co-op, except there's a pledge that the grower has engaged them as a marketing agent.
- Baum: I've heard the remark that some of the co-ops aren't as much of hustlers as a private company might be.
- Camp: I would dislike very much to see them have a monopoly, as I said, because there wouldn't be the competitive spirit, that's all. I heard a speech not long ago by a very high paid manager, the president of a big corporation in California, stressing the point that paid managers are much better than owner managers. He attended a study course on this at Stanford. I say it's so much baloney. The paid managers are fine, but if there's no owner-operator-manager to watch his own money and set the pattern, there wouldn't be any incentive for them to economize, because it's not their money.
- Baum: What was the relationship of the Cal Cotton Co-op Association to the American Cotton Co-operative Association?
- Camp: Before this date that I gave you, when we hired Selden to be the manager, when a fellow named Green at Delano was manager, he didn't know anything about cotton. He then was more or less--well, they pooled their cotton together and he let the American Cotton Co-operative Association sell it for him. He didn't want to do any selling at all. Of course, he didn't know how. That was just that much more money being taken out of the local growers' pockets. Too many hands to go through, too many offices to keep up. It didn't keep going too long. But when Selden came into it, he didn't have them do any of their marketing.
- Baum: There was no relationship after Selden came in?
- Camp: Well, I might not be entirely factual in saying that, but so far as my personal information is that's right. If not immediately it was very shortly after that that there was no relationship with it.

Individual Marketing

Baum: You said you sell your own cotton directly, and often get a better price than Cal-Cot. How are you able to get a better price?

Camp: Me? We have quantity, and we're just as well known by the buyers and mills as the Cal-Cot people are--maybe a little more so. The mills know that it's our own cotton and they can come to our own fields if they want to. We have a direct personal relationship.

Baum: Is your quality more regular?

Camp: Than the average of the others, yes. Because I can say to myself and our families that we do do a better job of growing than the average. We can be a little bit better than the average.

Baum: You have a little better quality to offer.

Camp: It's a highly consistent quality, and our buyers must think so too, because they come back year after year. Whatever the market is, they'll pay us, we can sell it all. But the co-op being able to get together a lot of growers, some larger than others, they've got all of it in lots by quality--here's middling cotton, inch and a sixteenth. But they've got so many hundred bales in each of the classifications, and if a mill wants a certain thing, here it is, same quantity, and it's advantageous to a mill to buy in quantity.

That's the chief advantage of a big co-op. Not necessarily over me, because we have a personal relationship. And our motto is and always has been: "A larger quantity of quality product on the same acre!"

Baum: And you're big enough to sell in quantity too.

Camp: Well, not the same quantity they do, of course, but in a quantity that's attractive to the buyers.

Baum: Does the co-op have other functions such as buying fertilizers?

Camp: No, this particular one doesn't. At least I don't think it does. Some cotton co-ops do in some of the other states, but as I understand it this one was and is strictly cotton marketing.

Camp: The one in El Paso had an oil mill, too.

Baum: I was going to ask you why the cotton co-op didn't own its own gins and oil mills? You say that the gins are co-operative.

Camp: They are. But we'll just say there's a dozen growers out here, maybe fifty; they all own this gin based on their acreage or baleage, and they hire their own manager and it's completely locally owned and operated, and they're all happy. It's controlled at home.

Baum: You do your own oil, don't you?

Camp: We ourselves don't have an oil mill. We got to the point of building one during the war and at the last conference in Washington you had to get on your tummy and ask for something, please, and they were delaying me too long and I said, well, wrap it up and forget it. Someday we may have one, even though we haven't yet. But we are getting for our seed, I think, the same price or practically the same price we would if we had our own oil mill. We have an arrangement with an oil mill that we are getting full value, so for the moment there's no incentive to build one. And some of our seed goes for planting. The boys are hoping that they'll get somebody else to grow it, but I doubt it. As long as we do a good job they're going to want us to do some, spread it around.

Aaron Sapiro; Parker Frisselle
(April 2, 1963--morning session)

Baum: When we were discussing co-operatives yesterday, I wondered if you had come across Aaron Sapiro, partner of John Francis Neylan.

Camp: Oh yes. One reason for this Fresno statement that was read a while ago, Aaron Sapiro had just at that time, maybe before, I've forgotten, he struck out on a campaign from California all the way to New York organizing co-ops; he was a great crusader and became talked of as the authority in the world on agricultural co-operatives. I was too new at the game and I was hard at work in the cotton to need his services or follow his advice too much at that time. But as I understand much of his work finally

Camp: backfired, exploded. He wasn't the tin god that he thought he was. He made a lot of money for himself and misery for a lot of other people across America. Whether you've read anything about what I'm saying I don't know, but I give you my opinion.

Baum: He didn't have anything to do with cotton co-operatives in Kern County?

Camp: No. There was not enough here at that time. But with the raisin people, the peach people, and all, he just bla-bla-bla. He just took off with his shirttails straight out behind him, figuratively speaking, all over America, preaching, crusading for agricultural co-ops. Friends of mine who knew more about it than I did, a little older, said that he profited plenty.

Baum: How could he profit?

Camp: Well, he must have had some sort of system, a commission or on the payroll so much for organizing. I don't know. But he made money, according to my information.

You can't organize people like that. It's better to let it kind of evolve. He wanted to cram it all down their throats right now, before people were ready for it. Maybe he had a good idea, but his particular way of doing it--I don't know. Parker Frisselle, who was into that much deeper than I was; Ralph Merritt of course was a party to that...

Baum: I think that's the way he had something to do with the Kearney Vineyards.

Camp: I won't go into that. Unfortunately he was also a promoter. Poor Parker, in later years Merritt bled Parker and all his friends for all the money he could get. Ralph's still living.*

Baum: I have heard Parker Frisselle's name several times, but never a description of him.

Camp: Parker Frisselle was a very dynamic individual, well versed in his subject matters, quick to catch on. I admired him very much. A very good presiding officer, and not just a presiding

*Ralph Merritt died April 3, 1963.

Camp: officer but a good speaker for a cause. Very effective. Many times I said to Parker on the telephone or something if I couldn't come to a meeting or if I had to leave before it was over, "Parker, if you are going to stay, vote twice, because you and I think alike and I'll go with you on everything." I respected him to that extent as long as he lived. I liked him very much.

Baum: He was quite a bit older than you were.

Camp: Oh yes. But I met him shortly after I came to California and had some experiments on the vineyard down there. I stayed at his home many many nights.

Baum: What did he look like?

Camp: He was slender and as you ladies would say, I would say, not a handsome man but a very striking man. I'm not very good at describing people. Maybe I could do better at describing my wife. But Parker served his community and his state well. Undoubtedly a lot of people didn't agree with him, but that's true of everyone who's out trying to do something, I guess. He stood very very high in all agriculture circles in California.

Baum: You certainly run across his name often when you read about California agriculture.

Camp: I personally respected him very much. I know nothing to the contrary, and I regret that I can't say that about every so-called agricultural leader. You know about his father, of course. His father was quite an agriculturalist. I didn't meet him. I guess maybe Parker was born in Kern County, but his father went down there for a while. Whether he was the one that came over from England to help in some of the subdivisions I'm not sure, but he came on up to Fresno and was in charge of it for the University there. He left it to the University; he owned it, didn't he?

Baum: No, that was Kearney. But Parker's father was on the Kearney Vineyard, I think, when Kearney owned it.

Camp: That's right. Yes.

May I hold on and go back to Parker for just a minute? At first, and before I left Washington, they said that the University wouldn't co-operate. Well, they did. Maybe it took a few months to get properly acquainted, but Professor Crocheron emphatically stated, and years and years afterwards

Camp: made many speeches that California shouldn't have cotton. It would ruin it. Now, Parker Frisselle did not share that viewpoint. He was one of the University men at the beginning, because he was in charge of the University farm plus the fact that originally they had an experiment station also on that farm. But Parker saw it in a broader light. He said the grapes and raisins and so on we have to have a lot of labor for, but we don't have any other work for that labor to do and we've got to develop something that we can have labor in here and keep it occupied. And from the standpoint of the vineyards he recognized cotton as another crop which would employ labor that could be used in both places. Later he also saw that cotton itself was going to be a good crop so he boosted it from both angles.

Baum: He was working for all-year-round employment.

Camp: Yes. Of all the people I worked with in the early days none had a broader view of that whole thing than did Parker. Of course, so far as the labor was concerned it was the same viewpoint that Old Mr. Nutting had, who gave me the automobile the first year I came out. But Nutting was interested only in the vineyards. He didn't necessarily see cotton itself as being a good crop.

Baum: Nutting was particularly interested in this one product...

Camp: Thompson seedless grapes. He developed that. But he saw the labor situation was terrible and unless there was some other crop to occupy the labor--so he went at it from that angle, alone at first. But Parker put in many hours, many days, many months, working on cotton as cotton for the benefit of California. He and Emory Wishon of the power company worked together very closely and allowed me to work with them.

Western Cotton Growers Association: Comments on Acreage Allotments

Baum: Well now, I have it that the Western Cotton Growers Association was organized in 1949, and I believe you were in on it. It said it was organized to lobby for larger cotton allotments for California, and the irrigated areas. It was organized because

Baum: of the parity payments.

Camp: Oh, '49. No, I wasn't particularly in on that. The predecessor of that with a similar name was in Arizona, New Mexico, and California, and we had our big organizational meeting in Phoenix and I presided. I've forgotten the year but it was considerably prior to '49. But it never did go ahead. There was no one pushing it particularly. However, the 1949 meeting and movement was a direct outgrowth of the earlier meeting in Phoenix, Arizona.

Baum: Was this to do with acreage allotments?

Camp: To do anything that would be beneficial to the three western states, and no one particular thing. The organization that finally evolved, the one you're talking about, had a meeting and said, now, we're going to lobby for special acreage allotments for California, Arizona, and New Mexico. In that field I sometimes was not in sympathy with some of the ways they would go at it. I don't want any special privileges for growers here--even though granted by law--if these same privileges are denied by the same law to growers in other states.

Baum: The president was Harold Pomeroy, and they employed as their lobbyist Ralph Bunje.

Camp: Yes, but only for a little while, one year maybe. Ralph Bunje is now manager of the California Peach Cannery Association, and has been ever since that particular job. Before that he was a government employee. They've employed ever since then, John Reynolds from Fresno. John Reynolds originally was with the Fresno Chamber of Commerce, I think, and when they organized the Valley Empire Association he was the secretary of that. That was to ballyhoo for everything in the valley, and he did. Then he was promoting mostly Cotton Maids. He still does some of that.

But the so-called Western Cotton Growers Association, the name Growers should have been left out but it makes it sound better. He has been in Washington most of the time, living at the Mayflower Hotel, lobbying for additional acreage for California regardless of what it does to any other state.

As proof of that radical statement I've just made they wrote a bill, and got it introduced by Congressman Harlan Hagen, giving to California 20 or 25 or 30 per cent increase in acreage above their allotment and denying that allotment

Camp: to the southern states. It specifically said so in the bill itself, and that's why I said I'm not always in sympathy with some of the things they try to do. I'm in sympathy with or favor us in California, and anywhere, getting the acreage that we naturally get through advantages of superior production--if we can outdo them on a free enterprise basis, competitive basis, fine and dandy. It's wrong otherwise.

Baum: Any time that the formula is established to give California more acreage, assuming there are a certain number of acres that are going to be planted and no more, that takes away from somewhere else?

Camp: That's right. Gradually, if we plant all our acres and there are some they don't plant in other states, it goes back into the national allotment and it gradually will come this way. But any state allotment should be used within that state if there are producers who can expand their acreage and mechanize. But if a state can't use its allotment it ought to go back in and be divided everywhere. This lobby back there is directly in opposition to my method of doing it. I don't approve of it.

Baum: Your heart is halfway in the South and halfway in California.

Camp: My heart is in America. It isn't because my heart is partly in the South and partly here. It's strictly a matter of right and wrong. I had the same philosophy when the South was trying to pass laws, and did, to keep us from getting the normal amount of acreage. I fought them with everything I had. I said to them, my own folks, "If it can be produced cheaper and naturally will grow better, okay, but you get busy."

And they're going to control the boll weevil one of these days and they can do it cheaper than we, and then the acreage will flow the other direction. Well, it could. I don't mean that they'll take it all from here, but it'll take it from inefficient growers here. And that's the way it should be.

So when they told me a few years ago when this bill was up for discussion they'd say we produce better quality, which is correct sometimes, but there's lots of places that grow awful good cotton--in some years better than we do. You can't argue on that basis alone. They said to me, "You've changed your philosophy over what you used to argue when the South was trying to pass laws."

I said, "No, I haven't changed my philosophy. Mine is precisely the same, you just analyze it. We're now doing something to try to deny them, they were trying to do something to

Camp: deny us. You've changed yours, because it's to your advantage out here."

But all you have to do is alert the congressmen and senators of the facts when something like this comes up. The trouble is that they keep a man there to slip something in as an amendment. They pay him in high wages--it's not cheap living at the Mayflower. But that's the way business is done.

Baum: The Western Cotton Growers Association was organized in 1949 and the first thing they did was hold a cotton congress in Memphis. Did you attend that?

Camp: No, but I know what they did it for. They (the western lobbyists) were damning everyone all over the southern states and they just went at it hammer and tongs and some of us argued and said that's not the way to approach it, approach it on a business basis of what is right for the industry as such and let the chips fall where they may. No, I never joined any of the conferences anywhere where they were trying to get something for one area as against another.

Baum: This article says they worked out a compromise with the southerners which was introduced in Congress and passed by "Cotton Ed" Smith.

Camp: In 1949? "Cotton Ed" Smith was almost dead and gone before 1949, I thought.

Baum: Anyway, it was a southern cotton congressman. The compromise that favored the South was that they exempted five-acre farms from the allotment. Any farm under five acres was exempted completely from acreage limitations. That is just the same as grain and wheat, under fifteen acres it's exempted. That wasn't much of a favor to anybody, because the five-acre man can't live anyway. It was no compromise to the people who really understand the situation.

Baum: It said they settled on a "tilled acreage" formula. I didn't understand that.

Camp: That means if you've got a hundred-acre farm and all of it is in alfalfa or cotton or crops or something, all of that's considered tilled land. If only fifty acres is in cultivation and the other fifty in woods or orchards or vineyards, it isn't tilled acreage--for the sake of this particular program. The formula worked out in Congress as it was that you couldn't get more than a certain percentage, at first I believe it was

Camp: 50 per cent--to cover more than fifty acres out of a hundred. But that wasn't worked out until it was in Congress itself. They might have had some meetings of minds but it still had to go to Congress.

Baum: This article went on to comment that when they came back to California with this tilled acreage formula that there developed a conflict between the growers on the east side and the growers on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley as to how it should be interpreted.

Camp: That's right, and it was mostly in Fresno County and Tulare County that that would be applicable. Speaking of Fresno County, what it meant was this: on the east side of Fresno County the fellows have, say, a one hundred-acre ranch and, say, fifty acres of it in vineyard and orchard, fifty acres in cotton. The fellow over on the west side has developed a hundred acres, all in cotton. He then was permitted to grow fifty acres of cotton (on the west side), while the man on the east side would be permitted to grow only twenty-five acres of cotton--half of his tilled acreage. The other half in orchard and vineyard wasn't called tilled acreage, for the sake of cotton.

Well, they considered that very unfair and I'm not sure but what they were right. I didn't enter that argument but it's debatable. The older farmers wonder why, because their vineyard may be just on the way of completely being no good, and yet they establish them with twenty-five acres and a year or two later they have to pull up their vineyard, yet this is officially established. It takes quite a bit to change your original basis. There's a little more to it than what I've said, but in essence that's the argument. And there's some justification for the east side objecting to it.

International Cotton League of the West
(July 11, 1963 session)

Baum: When we were discussing associations of cotton growers I don't think we mentioned the International Cotton League of the West.

Camp: Yes. A lot of things were being thought about at this time, one of them being quarantine. We wanted to make sure we could get some quarantine laws passed that would keep the boll weevil out of California and Arizona and the Southwestern valley.

Baum: This was when?

Camp: 1920 or '21, probably 1920 was when we started talking about it. Dr. G. P. Clements, who was director of the agricultural department or committee of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, and a very influential agricultural leader in California at that time, became very much interested in cotton in California and was very helpful, in thinking ahead in all the things we did.

Baum: I didn't realize the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce was so active in agriculture then.

Camp: Well, Dr. Clements happened to be a very intelligent man and a forward-looking man, and he is credited with and is responsible for part of the phenomenal growth of Los Angeles in those early days. But he went beyond Los Angeles in his thinking and thought of the state as a whole, agriculturally.

Baum: I see he sent you this letterhead of the International Cotton League of the West. Oh, was he an M.D.?

Camp: He was an M.D. and he came west for his health in his young days and got to puttering around with agriculture and then got into agriculture in a very big, scientific way.

Baum: I see some well-known names here. George Hecke.

Camp: He was director of the Department of Agriculture of the State of California, and he was extremely helpful in bringing, or perhaps I should say, getting cotton officially accepted in California. At the beginning some of the leaders in the University of California were not at all sympathetic to the coming of cotton, and being the emissary of the U.S.D.A. and the War Department out here, I felt I had to have somebody to

Camp: help me, and I met the agricultural commissioners and then Dr. Hecke, the state director in Sacramento, and they were extremely helpful. I felt then and do now that it was a great service they rendered to the state.

Baum: Did Hecke come to Bakersfield?

Camp: Many times. He met many places all over the state, any time we'd ask him. In fact, almost everybody who was asked to a meeting in those early years came, because it was evident in a few years that cotton was probably going to be accepted and be a good crop. Even the University people who objected to cotton would come to the meetings and give their views, which was good. This placed everything squarely on the table, so to speak.

Baum: I see Harry Chandler listed on the letterhead.

Camp: The owner of the Los Angeles Times, and the Chandlers were big operators in Mexico at that time; they had a lot of farming going on down there. Mr. Chandler was extremely helpful to us. He was an elderly man and I was a youngster, but his office was open to me any time I wanted to go.

Baum: What was the function of the legislative committee? I see there was a quarantine committee and a legislative committee.

Camp: No one could tell what would come of this, so we just thought out as completely as possible all the possible things that might be done, and we set up committees. The quarantine committee was to get quarantine laws passed, and about this time we did get some quarantine laws having to do with boll weevil and boll worm. We had a pest control committee; of course that's somewhat similar. And a pure seed committee and a labor committee.

Baum: I see a lot of the people were from Arizona.

Camp: Yes. Actually we had the director of the Department of Agriculture of Arizona; he attended our meetings and was very helpful. There was no fight between California and Arizona in this matter as there has been in recent years over water matters.

Baum: Ralph Merritt was on the legislative committee--he didn't have anything to do with cotton, did he?

Camp: No, he had nothing really to do with cotton except I believe he was comptroller of the University of California at the time and as such he had to do with the Kearney Vineyard, in a general way, which was owned by the University. Parker Frizzell was the general manager there and he operated it for the University, and I believe his contact was Ralph Merritt. In that way Ralph

Camp: Merritt became interested.

Baum: The International Cotton League didn't survive as an organization?

Camp: Well, it wasn't a matter of not surviving, it was a matter of everybody feeling their way, and as cotton developed in the West, we just wondered if there was any place for an international cotton league, and we just let it die. That's what happened. Some of the leaders themselves faded out of the picture. The idea that was held at the time this organization was started was never abandoned, it just took different forms and operated in different ways.

Baum: Did Dr. Clements continue to work on cotton?

Camp: Dr. Clements continued to be very much interested in cotton right up until the time he passed away, along about '54 or so.

There was another man in the Department of Agriculture under Dr. Hecke I should mention, Lee Strong. He was at that time in charge of the quarantine department, I believe, and it was he, with the help of some others, who developed the California law on quarantine, which is still on the books, against boll weevil and I think boll worm. They did the wording of it and I was an adviser to them.

Baum: When was that passed?

Camp: About the time of the International Cotton League of the West, I've forgotten what year.

Later Lee Strong was pulled into Washington as head of the quarantine division of the national Department of Agriculture. A very fine man.

Baum: Was he there when you were in Washington? When you were with the AAA?

Camp: I was connected with Washington while I was out here, until I joined the Bank of Italy (now Bank of America). He had passed away before I went back to Washington with the AAA.

Baum: I see you had a few Mexicans on this committee; that's what made it international.

Camp: Yes. We had the entomologist from UC, Dr. Voorhies. We also had a federal man, O. A. Pratt, from the federal horticultural board of Calexico, California. His being stationed there was for quarantine purposes against Mexico.

Baum: One of these Mexican people was Guillermo Martinez de Castro, president of the Chamber of Agriculture, Mexicali, Mexico.

Camp: They were working with the Los Angeles Times man, Mr. Chandler, helping to get their labor into California.

Baum: I didn't realize Arizona had gone into cotton so early.

Camp: Yes, they had gone into Egyptian cotton, and then they expanded very rapidly after that.

About that time, the Goodyear Tire Company came into Arizona and wanted to grow a lot of long-staple cotton, and frankly tried to hire a lot of people who tried to get me to head up their operations.

Baum: They were going to grow their own cotton?

Camp: They did; they bought a lot of land there. The town of Litchfield now was one of the cotton fields the Goodyear Tire Company had, and Mr. Litchfield, I believe, was then president of Goodyear and turned it into a real estate development instead of cotton fields now. They looked over thousands of acres in Kern County and almost bought many thousands of acres, but didn't.

Baum: Do you think it would have been an economic operation for them to raise their own cotton instead of buying it?

Camp: No. I don't think it was over there, but they thought it might be. They had a tire plant in Los Angeles, and it was for that tire factory they thought they would grow cotton.

Kern County Land Company and Agricultural Development of Kern County

Baum: You mentioned that the Kern County Land Company was selling land then, and that they aren't now.

Camp: Again, there's nothing so constant as change. They have changed their method of operation and their thinking. They discovered oil on their land, you see, after all this, and the new management-- they've changed several times since I've been here. They have

Camp: to retire at a certain age, and some of us don't get any older, we just keep farming, so we see lots of changes!

Baum: They owned a lot of property, and still do. What influence did they have on agriculture? Were they far-seeing in working on new crops?

Camp: In the early days they weren't particularly far-seeing, that is, they didn't do much farming on their own. All their farming was in cattle and they grew alfalfa and milo and nothing else--maybe a little grain, but not much. But Mr. Jastro, who was the general manager when I came here, was very much interested in cotton. He was an elderly gentleman then, but he was quite anxious to see us experiment, and gave us everything we wanted for experimental purposes.

He said, "If cotton will grow properly, it should be a good crop for the state." Just why they didn't go into it themselves in a big way I can't answer, but they were then willing to sell land to other people to grow cotton or anything else.

Baum: Would Mr. Jastro have encouraged the company to expand their operations to other than cattle?

Camp: I can't answer that, I wasn't on the inside, but they did not expand to anything else. If my opinion is worth anything even today, I would say that they are better off to let someone else do the farming than to do it themselves. In general.

Baum: You mean they'd do better to just lease the land?

Camp: My opinion is that, and I'm pretty sure that their books will show that they get more net income from the tenants than they do from their own operations. I can't prove that but I'm pretty sure.

Baum: They held onto their land for a long time; does that mean that people were unwilling to buy or were their prices too high?

Camp: Both. They were willing to sell. They didn't have it on the market with real estate men trying to sell it. They preferred to sell in colonies; like they sold a lot of land around the town of Shafter and Wasco, but they didn't sell--you'd have to buy a piece of land close to one of these colonies. They wouldn't sell you a small piece of land out in the middle of their land.

Baum: They wouldn't want parcels all broken up.

Camp: No, and I don't blame them.

Baum: Did the fact that they owned a lot of land which they weren't using effectively retard agriculture in Kern County?

Camp: Yes, it did. I don't say that with an accusing finger, but it just naturally did. And I guess if the truth were known, it still does. They still have a lot of land that isn't developed. If it were sold to individuals, it would be developed. I'm not going to say that that would be best for the county, because maybe those individuals would go broke, I don't know. But the land itself would be put to use.

Baum: Before 1953, they were under President John Pigott.

Camp: A very fine gentleman, fine lawyer.

Baum: He must have been very conservative.

Camp: Very conservative. He is, but he's an excellent man. His idea was when they started developing that--I was the first one responsible for persuading him to start on a development program, and they hired my friend Carl Melcher to head it up. He made a survey and came up with the recommendation that they develop. By that time World War II had come along and they couldn't get machinery to develop, drill wells, so I agreed to go to Washington for them at my expense, and made several trips, with some of their engineers, and persuaded the folks I knew in Washington to allot the equipment. They've been developing new land in a big way ever since.

Baum: That was still under Pigott's administration then.

Camp: Yes. They weren't selling any land, though. As soon as they found oil they decided to withdraw sales of all land. Even now when they sell a piece of land for any purpose--at first, when they sold a piece of land after that they retained half the mineral rights. Today I believe they retain all the mineral rights.

Baum: Did Mr. Melcher succeed Jastro?

Camp: No, there were several in there for short periods. Jastro died and then Mr. Frank Munzer became manager, and then he died and Mr. Frank Whitaker became manager, and he died, and I think then Mr. Osbourne became manager for a very short while. No, Mr. Hugh Allen became manager; Osbourne was never manager, he was the land man, in charge of land sales. Frank Whitaker had been chief engineer.

Camp: These people were all in the company. Munzer was assistant manager when Jastro was there. Mr. Allen was assistant engineer under Whitaker, became chief engineer and then manager. Then while Allen was manager Mr. Pigott decided to hire Mr. Melcher to make a survey, and his recommendation was for development and to lease most of it to good farmers. Pretty soon after that Mr. Melcher was asked if he would stay with the company in charge of their farming operations. Mr. Allen was still the general manager, but within a year or so he retired and Mr. Melcher became vice-president and general manager.

Baum: So Mr. Melcher's coming was the beginning of the changeover?

Camp: Yes. It was because of Mr. Melcher as an individual and because of his personality and foresight that they launched into the development program in agriculture--his idea was for them not to farm much but develop the land and get good tenants to farm it, and that's what they were doing in a big way when Mr. Melcher passed away. He was in charge of everything as general manager, under Mr. Piggott as president. It's not publicly known, but I can definitely say that I know Melcher was offered the presidency of the company, but he didn't want to be president. His wife and I are the only ones who know he had suffered a slight heart attack. They hired Mr. George Montgomery. Mr. Pigott stayed on as chairman of the board.

When Mr. Melcher died, the management of the properties themselves changed to a different system. Instead of having one man in general charge of everything, they put a man in charge of oil operations, another man in charge of cattle operations, another man in charge of field crop operations, another in charge of engineering operations, etc. It's not up to me to pass judgment on what that meant, but from the experience I've had with them since, my own judgment was and is that it was a terrible thing to do because when you've got a lot of bosses you cannot have efficiency, and they didn't.

Recently, a couple of years ago, they brought down another man as vice-president in charge of agriculture, so it's his job to co-ordinate all of these others. The man they brought down to co-ordinate all the agricultural folks, however, was a CPA, an accountant, not an agriculturally trained man, but he co-ordinates the planning of all these others!

Baum: Did the general manager of the Kern County Land Company usually take part in your farmer organizations?

Camp: Oh yes, he was extremely active, and he could designate other

- Camp: employees of the organization to act in certain capacities. But Mr. Jastro himself when he was there was one of the prime movers in helping me to get cotton recognized and he and Mr. C. A. Barlow, a former congressman, and others helped get the one-variety law passed. It was through their influence that I was able to get it done.
- Baum: They do all kinds of things now, don't they? They've got something in Australia, oil in other parts of the United States...
- Camp: Yes, they are diversifying, and they are doing it as a big company for exactly the same reason that we are diversifying crops. They've got their stock listed on the New York Stock Exchange, and a lot of people own some of that stock. They have a responsibility now, even more than when it was closely held by just a few families. So that's why the management feels they've got to diversify into other fields.
- Baum: They also own and provide water services.
- Camp: That is because in the early days they were the ones who saw the possibilities of irrigation, capturing this water going down the Kern River, and they built lots of canals, miles and miles of them, and put in the check dams and so on to divert the water from the river and use it, and as you know there are certain laws, riparian rights, which say the people who have been using the water over a period of time have the first rights to it. I'm not sure that I can condemn that. It's because of that that they have now most of the Kern River water, and it goes through the same canals and they sell it to whoever has land adjacent to it. (Provided the land was former K.C.L. land.)
- Baum: Do they provide an adequate service?
- Camp: It's quite all right. They supply all the water there is available. They don't have all of it; Miller and Lux had developed and were using quite a bit of the water--it's less than the land company had, but the same percentage has to pass on to other lands.
- Baum: You buy some of your water from them, don't you?
- Camp: Yes, I have some land that the canals go right through, on my land--early day users.
- Baum: Is their water reasonably priced for that area?
- Camp: The land that I get part of the water for from those canals,

Camp: not necessarily just because they have the water there but because the land is in an area where the water table is not so deep. But that's my cheapest water.

Baum: From them?

Camp: Yes, but I'm not saying it's because--I guess maybe I'm properly located.

Baum: I suppose they make a profit on the water.

Camp: Well, they have to or they couldn't keep going.

Baum: I did an interview with a man who organized irrigation districts, and usually he was hired by the water company, or the canal company, to organize a public irrigation district because almost every canal company in California was going broke.

Camp: That's right, they did. I had considerable experience with that during the great depression of '29-'33, when I was with the Bank of America. The bank was in the position of almost taking over most of those. But they've got to make a profit or else they can't stay in business.

Baum: In the canal companies that the bank had to take over, what did they do about them?

Camp: As quickly as they could they reorganized them and got them back in the hands of the growers. They didn't want them.

Baum: They organized them into public districts?

Camp: I didn't take it beyond that point, so I'd better not say just exactly how they were reorganized. They got engineers and lawyers to help them, though.

COTTON IN CALIFORNIA--LABOR IN THE 1920's and 1930's
(April 2, 1963--morning session continued)

Labor in the 1920's

Baum: I wanted to ask you about the labor situation--what kind of laborers you have used over the years in the San Joaquin Valley. Go back to the early 1920's.

Camp: I think I've already made one statement about labor. In 1917 when I first came to California, I had a conference here at Berkeley with Dr. Wickson, and he expressed very well the attitude of a lot of people at that time in California--he said, "Well, cotton won't grow down there in the San Joaquin Valley but if it did, you couldn't harvest it. Nobody picks cotton but Negroes." He truly thought that was true.

When we planted it we found there were people to pick it, Mexicans and white people. A lot of families got out and picked cotton themselves. Much of the Egyptian cotton was picked by the families themselves except on the larger acreages. And the Mexican population seemed to come in from somewhere, and the Negro population seemed to increase, but most were white people who had picked cotton in other states. They came in very fast, from Oklahoma and Arkansas and Texas...

Baum: That was in the thirties?

Camp: That was when the migrants came in great numbers, but they started coming in the twenties, '24, '25--not migrating but in increased numbers. Cotton has a way of attracting people who've worked in it. Braceros, so far as I know, were never brought into the valley specifically to pick cotton. But there were plenty at all times.

Baum: Some crops used Filipino laborers.

Camp: Yes, but not cotton. I don't know of any Filipinos that picked cotton, nor Japanese nor Chinese. I remember a speech that I made at the Bakersfield Rotary Club back in '23, I think it was, telling why we should have one variety, and Mr. Jastro, general manager of the Kern County Land Company, got up and said, reminiscing a little about earlier experiences with cotton, it failed because they had Chinese brought in to pick cotton and their fingers were short and therefore they broke the staple in picking it! Which was technically not correct but he thought it was correct. You don't break cotton fibers that way, but it was an interesting observation.

But talking about labor, the Dust Bowl in the West and Midwest was so terrible they (the farm people) had to leave and go somewhere, and cotton was a crop out here increasingly important and there was some work for some of them. California got so many of these displaced people there was never work for all of them in cotton or anything else for a few years. That's what made the situation so terrible. The farmers out here went on the air with paid programs and begged them not to come. I have copies of those documents.

But they came on, and I don't blame them. They were coming because they could get relief out here right shortly from the state government, and I guess maybe the federal government was helping out too, but anyway in California they could get more relief money than they could in any other state and as far as I'm concerned, once knowing that, they'd have been crazy not to come, because they had to go somewhere. They had to leave where they were. As bad as it was, they were wiser than we were. They were told they could get relief even if they didn't get work, and it proved to be true--painful to California, but a lot of those people are now some of our best citizens. All they needed was an opportunity, and they had to go somewhere.

Baum: That was about 1933, wasn't it?

The Agricultural Labor Bureau--1926

Baum: I was wondering about the formation of the Agricultural Labor Bureau, which was formed before that, in 1926.

Camp: In Fresno. A Mexican man was manager of the Agricultural Labor Bureau. It was organized primarily to obtain, as I recall it, labor for the fruits--vineyards and orchards, and in order to have the thing so one farmer wouldn't be competing with another for his labor this was a kind of a clearing house.

By the way, Parker Frisselle had as much to do with organizing that as anyone else, and had probably more to do with thinking through the policies that they should follow. It may be unfair to somebody else in giving him all the credit, but it seemed to me that his understanding was very very good. It was for the benefit of the growers of the fruits, of course, and also for the benefit of the labor itself--if it was to operate the way it was theoretically set up to do, and so far as I know I guess it did. One grower wouldn't be competing with his neighbor, and labor running from here to yonder.

I'm quite sure that nobody at any time had any idea of that organization being used for the purpose of exploiting the labor. I want to emphasize that to start with. I was not a member of starting it and so on, I didn't have that much experience with the labor on these other crops, but it did operate, and later we did operate through it when I was with the bank, and it benefited everybody including labor.

Baum: It went on for a long time.

Camp: Oh yes, a long time, and the Mexican manager was still there in 1933 when I moved away from Fresno. I don't know his name, but it's a Mexican name, and a very fine gentleman. He was dealing because he could speak the language of many of the laborers, and he was a diplomat of the finest kind. It worked fine. Now, I remember his name. Frank Palomeris!

Baum: Do you remember who any of the other leaders in it were?

Camp: Yes. I think Ben Hays was president of it for quite some time, he was a Madera farmer. I'm not sure but what maybe Lloyd Frick, of Bakersfield, was president of it one year. It shifted around.

Baum: Ralph Bunje was former manager of the Agricultural Labor Bureau, I have down here in my notes.

Camp: Yes, but he too was there only a short while.

Baum: This group set the wages so there wouldn't be the frittering around of labor.

Camp: Yes. When you say "set the wages" that wasn't just a group of men getting in a corner and smoking a cigar and setting wages. It was done on an exchange of the best information that the people had all over the valley, and believe it or not, farmers did then and still do want to pay, and do pay all they can afford to pay.

Farm labor wages are lower than we want them to be, but they can only pay with what they get. It's still on that same basis. But today the federal government comes around, on sugar beets, and all over the state they have meetings and determine what the going wages are, and the federal government determines the wage set for sugar beets. So it's no different from what the growers were doing; in fact, it's based, I suspect, pretty much on this other as a pattern.

Labor in the 1930's

Labor Unrest in 1933--Outside Agitators

Camp: I'd better not skip 1933 when we had a lot of labor trouble--not by the laborers at all, but outside agitators came in. Many of them were Communists; we definitely located many of them and there was no question of their affiliations. The agitators, the leaders, just wanted to agitate; they said, "We're going to organize, and we'll make you pay twice as much as you're paying."

Well, easier said than done; when you're operating in crops you've got to sell the crops to get money to pay wages, so the agitators found out quite often that growers would just have to close shop. If you can't sell your produce for more than the cost of harvesting it you'd better not harvest it, and that's what happened quite often.

I know that in 1933 there was a lot of agitation and

Camp: it got to be very desperate, and one or two people were killed down in Kern County. There was a lot of excitement, and it went on for a good part of that year, but we got rid of those agitators and it quieted down.

Baum: Was this mainly in grapes?

Camp: No, that was in cotton that I'm talking about now. But almost 100 per cent of the turmoil was caused by agitation, and I don't just loosely use the term "agitator." We knew them to be that. Some women came into the picture--I can recall one of them, a big fat gal.

Baum: Caroline Becker?

Camp: Oh yes, she was very prominent. I think you'd have no difficulty in affiliating her with plenty of radical organizations, if not subversive. But there was one big fat lady that went all over the country, and even a couple of years ago--she may be in Russia now, but she was a known Communist and was one of the leaders of the agitators. But they could stir up a lot of newcomers and cause a lot of trouble.

In 1938, for instance, 1936, '7, '8 and '9 when the great migration came, and it was during that time that John Steinbeck lived in a government labor camp in Kern County on a piece of land that was bought by the government off the farm that I owned, so it was adjoining my operations, and he gathered his filth for the book Grapes of Wrath. There were accusations made in the book about growers and organizations and so on. None of them are true. The only truth he had in there was there were a lot of people coming out here, they were living wherever they could pitch a tent or put out a blanket, because there were just no places to go. But when he got down to accusing people, said they were brought here, all of that was complete fabrication. He has later admitted publicly over the overseas radio, Voice of America, that he exaggerated some of the statements that he found out later weren't entirely true. Well, anyway the damage had already been done.

But during all of that, we had lots more labor than we needed. I happened to be president of the Associated Farmers down there at the time, and we had to combat this agitation. So in 1938, two months, six weeks before we started picking cotton, I had information about when strikes were going to be attempted, what field, what grower, and

Camp: all about it. So when I get that information I call the growers together, we have a meeting and lay the facts out, say this is what is planned. And they did exactly on schedule, as predicted, they tried it, so the growers knew there was some factual information coming to us.

Well, I'm very happy to say today that that information came to us from loyal migrants who were wonderful Americans, but who'd had unfortunate luck with the weather back home. But they were still good Americans. One man who gave me lots of information, I'd never known him before, but he brought his whole family out and he and his wife, his son and his son's wife, daughter and the daughter's husband, were all picking cotton.

They had gone away for two months after the cotton and had worked in other crops in northern California, Oregon, and Washington, and they knew what agitation was going on. So he got in his car and drove down to see me and tell me all these things.

He said, "Now, I'm sure of my facts."

I said, "I know you are."

This man made the long trip to inform me at his own expense, wouldn't let me pay him a dime.

Well, it turned out exactly as I was advised. And he said, "Don't you give in. We'll stick with you. We'll be back."

There were several hundred people involved in ours-- many thousands altogether, of course.

So we had the kind of flying squadron that would come around and try to do these things. They didn't want to talk to me much because they knew I was willing to talk and stand up, but they'd go out and do these things and think I wouldn't hear about it ahead of time. Well, there were a lot of good loyal people, and I say God bless those people who came from the Dust Bowl, because they are some of our best citizens today. They were then, they were just unfortunate.

This man came to me out of the field in '38, and he says, "Don't give in. You can't afford to pay any more than you're paying." Cotton was down to ten cents a pound

Camp: or so.

He said, "You can't. We know, we've grown it all our lives, and we want you to be paid something." So, with that kind of spirit we weathered the storm. We talked everything out in the open with these laborers, and believe me, they were not agitators.

We tried to keep that book (Grapes of Wrath) from being made into a picture because it was a complete lie, the way it was stated, and it was unfortunate that the migrants were accused of being the kind of people they were in the book. One of the workers on the place said, "I want to burn that book up." He burned it, and a picture was taken of him doing it. They were incensed, it made them awfully mad, and I didn't blame them because I belonged in the same category. I'd come to California from picking cotton in South Carolina too, so these folks and I were from exactly the same kind of folks. And they knew it.

That's the trouble with most of our strikes today, radical leaders, not labor itself. No reason for all these strikes. I believe in unions. But I cannot operate, I'd close shop--when the grapes are ready to pick they've got to be picked. And when a cherry is ready to harvest it's ready that hour. Not tomorrow. A fresh peach. And a plum the same way.

Baum: After that 1933 strike--.

Camp: That was where there were one or two killed.

Baum: You were working for the bank then, weren't you?

Camp: Yes.

Baum: George Creel had something to do with that. He was NRA regional director. And Timothy Reardon.

Camp: Yes. George Creel was given some wrong information at that time and admitted it to me later. I didn't know him then, but later he and I became very good friends, until he died. He acted--I've forgotten the details now, what was he? NRA regional director, yes.

Baum: Apparently he and Timothy Reardon, who was with the State Industrial Board, were supposed to come in and figure out some peaceful settlement of this thing.

Camp: Well, he made some recommendations, the details of which I can't tell you now. They weren't the same kind of recommendations he would have made had he really had all the facts, and later he realized that somebody had fed him some stuff.

But I like George Creel, very much. I'm sure his heart was right all the time. He was a very big man, world wide, and then following this episode he became convinced that there were a lot of people agitating and feeding him stuff that wasn't just--cricket, and he became one of the greatest fighters against communism. He didn't realize at first that communism was the threat.

Baum: There was talk then that they would get a grant that would help, and the grant didn't come through.

Camp: I don't remember.

Baum: I think that was the strike that was organized by the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Union.

Camp: Yes, and you know what they are. Cannery people were kicked out, weren't they, of the AF of L because they were communist-dominated. It's still recognized as being communist-dominated.

Baum: I don't think it's much of a union now.

Camp: No, but whatever it is, it's the same type of thinking.

Baum: There was a riot there, and a couple of people were killed.

Camp: Oh yes. One of our close friends, Hugh Jewett, was out in the field, as innocent a man as ever was, and one of these radicals whammed him over the head and almost killed him. He was out in his own cotton field. People were so aroused, because there were so many radicals in there and they started it all of a sudden, and others were being led by them. The radicals almost, almost took over.

Formation of Associated Farmers--1933

Baum: The Associated Farmers hadn't been organized yet, had they? This was 1933.



La Follette Committee hearings in Sacramento. In witness stand were Ed Law (left); Holmes Bishop, farmer head; Phil Bancroft, farm group advisor; and W.B. Camp, Associated Farmer's treasurer.



Richard M. Nixon campaign for Governor of California, 1962. W.B. Camp was Co-chairman "Farmers for Nixon".

Camp: They were active from then. That caused the Associated Farmers to be.

Baum: This was when they realized they'd have to have a permanent organization?

Camp: Yes. I wasn't president of the Associated Farmers until I got back from Washington. The same fellows came out to the ranch--I didn't even have a telephone, and they said, "We've had a meeting and you're to be president of the Associated Farmers." As simple as that. I guess that was in '37 sometime.

Baum: Election by appointment.

Camp: We had some rough times for a year or two after that, because of that book Grapes of Wrath and those kinds of people.

I was state treasurer of the Associated Farmers for two or three years, had to collect the money to keep it going. It was not secret where we got the money, got it where we could. Associated Farmers was organized just for one purpose--no, two purposes, but they really amounted to one. It was to fight communism. It was the communists who at that time--I don't say it was only communists who wished to organize a union. Not at all. They're really not interested in unions as such.

But we knew that the folks who were trying to organize the agricultural workers were definitely communists or dominated by communists, and therefore the organization was to fight communism, and to fight them in organizing farm labor. We didn't care about them being organized, but this thing with the closed shop, we just can't operate that way. If they want to belong to the Baptist Church or some labor union for the sake of paying dues, that's O.K., who cares? And that's all the Associated Farmers was for.

John Abt was the one that led the investigation of the Senator LaFollette committee in California, and when it was being done I told them (U.S.D.A., Congress, and President Roosevelt--and others), "Your investigators are themselves communists, and therefore they can't make a proper report." They (Senator LaFollette and Abt) denied that. Subsequently John Abt did admit that he was a communist, had been for a long time.

In the meantime the farmers in California had been

Camp: damned and damned and damned all over America, by President Roosevelt and Mrs. Roosevelt, publicly over national hookups, radio, many times. And of course Senator LaFollette himself did, and others of the left wing did over and over and over. It did no good for us to tell them that their investigators and their report was all communist-dominated. They didn't believe it or didn't want to believe it, one or the other. Probably Phil Bancroft told you that same story. Phil was state president of the Associated Farmers for a year. No, I think not...

Baum: He was vice-president, and a director for many years.

Camp: Yes. John Watson was president of it once. He has changed his philosophy on many things, and Phil Bancroft and I haven't. John Watson was a very effective operator in the Associated Farmers then. He can't today, nor ever, say that Associated Farmers when he was president of it did anything that wasn't truly American and for the benefit of America. I said then publicly that I knew of no organization in America, including my own church, that was more dedicated to America. That doesn't mean that there wouldn't be some fools in the Associated Farmers.

Baum: I'll start this afternoon with some questions on the '39 strike. There was an investigation by the Commission on Immigration and Housing, down in Madera County.

Camp: In Madera County. Then I wouldn't know a lot about it. Stone was the health officer there; Hays and them would be in on that.

1938 and 1939--More Labor Threats
(April 2, 1963--afternoon session)

Baum: Let's go back to the strike of 1939. Do you recall the threatened strike then, led by the CIO United Cannery, Agriculture, Packing and Allied Workers and the Workers Alliance, and they threatened to strike because the Agricultural Labor Bureau had set a cotton picking rate of eighty cents per hundred pounds and they thought it was inadequate?

Camp: That was in Madera County, wasn't it?

Baum: Yes. They had a wage board hearing and I believe that was in Madera.

Camp: I think Ben Hays was president of the Agricultural Labor Bureau at that time and he lived in Madera County on a farm. He continued to be president for many years. He died last year, I think. Whether that's why they picked on Madera County I'm not sure, but it could be. I didn't really participate in that. It didn't materialize in any big way at all.

Baum: May, 1939. Governor Olson asked the Commission on Immigration and Housing to hold public wage rate hearings in Madera County.

Mrs.

Camp: Well, in April 1938 big groups of 350 or more met in a session and were warned of a radical strike that was trying to take place by the AF of L and CIO. [Reading from scrapbook]

"350 farmers and their wives gathered here last night"--this was in Kern County, Bakersfield--"for the first annual banquet of the Associated Farmers of Kern County and heard leaders of the State Association deliver militant addresses of warning that 1938 would surely bring farm labor trouble which could be defeated only by unified action to save the farmers of the state from ruination. The crowd was as diversified as the crops which are raised in Kern County. There were cotton planters, fruit growers, truck farmers, cattle ranchers, sheep men and others present. Some of the men were young, many of them recent graduates of agricultural schools. Some of them were elderly and their calloused hands were gnarled with years of toil and defeat. As one, they applauded when their speakers declared that the Association would fight for the protection of their farms and homes."

Camp: That's right.

Mrs.

Camp: "W. B. Camp, president of the Kern County Association presiding as master of ceremonies, welcomed the group to the first annual banquet meeting declaring that 'the Association did not want ballyhoo to gain membership.' He declared that the Association had a sizeable and healthy membership who joined voluntarily. Mr. Camp then introduced the directors of the Kern County Association who were seated at the speakers' table. They were Mr. Camp, Hugh Allen--"

Camp: Hugh Allen was manager of the Kern County Land Company at that time.

Mrs.

Camp: "H. J. Brant, L. W. Bennen, H. L. Pomeroy, vice-president, A. I. Tucker, secretary, J. E. Regan, George Mindeburo, Phil Klipstein, Harry S. Mellen, and Joseph DiGiorgio. At the introduction of Mr. Mindeburo the president pointed out that he had been the leader of the sheepmen in their recent fight against the strike which tied up the shearing in the county for a short period. Mr. Mindeburo then introduced the twelve sheepmen who were with him in the labor struggle."

Camp: Mindeburo was a sheepman and a cattleman. He wasn't doing any farming other than that, but he came to America as a shepherd from the Pyrenees and became a sheep grower. At this time he was the largest sheep grower, if not in California then certainly in Kern County, and later he became the largest in the state. He is now dead. He was Basque. His son today is the president of the California Sheep Growers Association.

Mrs.

Camp: Mr. Mindeburo got into some financial trouble with his sheep because of a lot of these difficulties, and he came to Bill for help financially.

Camp: First it was this strike, and as president of the Associated Farmers I went at it night and day, and I saw to it that the farmers were protected. But he and I became completely inseparable because of our operations in this kind of thing.

Mrs.

Camp: He got to depending on Bill because Bill understood people better than he did, and he felt he could explain himself to Bill and Bill then could advise him.

Camp: And he'd stand on his head to do anything to help America, some of us would say.

Mrs.

Camp: He died quite well-to-do, and he said that Bill was responsible for helping him, because he would have lost everything, with these strikes.
[Continuing reading] "Mr. Stuart Strathman, field secretary of the Associated Farmers of California..."

Camp: And a good one.

Mrs.

Camp: "...was introduced as the man who aids the farmers in every part of the state when strikes come. Mr. Strathman talked on the things already planned by labor and radical groups to tie up the harvest of crops during the coming year. He declared that the group assembled were workers, that the Association's fight

Mrs.

Camp: was not against workers but against the un-American type of labor problems."

"Sounding a strong warning to all agriculture, the speaker stated that three problems face the Association and the farmers of California. The first problem, he said, is the CIO group, dominated by the same men who in the past dominated various radical groups. They have changed their tactics, he declared. In years past they have waited until crops were all ready to harvest and then they went among the workers and began agitating for strikes."

"Now, he continued, they see this has failed, so they have been working the year 'round. In one county alone, the speaker pointed out, they have obtained twelve hundred new members since last harvest, with most of their efforts concentrated on field labor. Strathman declared that leaders of the movement had stated they planned to concentrate this year on the cotton laborers, which is of vital interest to Kern County, and warned they are better organized than ever before."

"The second problem, the field secretary stated, is the American Federation of Labor, which has enrolled sixty thousand members. These members are chiefly cannery workers and employees of packing houses. Labor councils in the various cities are becoming interested in the field, he said."

"The speaker stated he did not believe that the two fronts would co-operate, for he believed the AF of L would refuse to co-operate with the CIO, but he was afraid that the CIO would back an AF of L strike if it would harass the farmers."

"We try to prevent strikes of the farm laborers by fair wages and decent living conditions," Strathman said, "and if we can't deal with strikes we can break them. We have and we will."

Camp: We had to. It wasn't a question of "can." We had to.

Mrs.

Camp: "The third problem he discussed was a new one, that of boycott and of stopping the products when they reach the market. This he termed 'Dave Beckism' and a 'hot cargo,' and the problem is heartbreaking to the the farmers, he said."

"However, this new development means, he continued, that the businessman has a stake in the farm strike problem.

Mrs.

Camp: It is time the farmers appealed to the citizens for support when they are right and for censure when wrong. If the farmer cannot market his product after the risk of harvesting under strike conditions, it is impossible for the farmer to support the community. To the merchants, he issued a warning that agriculture is the backbone of commerce in the state. He concluded that these three problems can be faced only by a unified agriculture and support of the public."

Chairman Camp called the attention of the group to the reason for Associated Farmers declaring that it was an organization formed with these objects and purposes: to protect, preserve, and maintain the constitutional form of government in both the nation and the states; to promote and protect the economic and agricultural welfare of the citizens of the United States and particularly the citizens of California; to oppose and combat any and all doctrines and practices which imperil the maintenance of these constitutional liberties; to protect the American schools and constitutional privileges which the educational system of America has brought to all children; to fight the infiltration of subversive doctrines into the educational system and into the government; to combat the dictatorship of individuals or groups; and to promote the prompt, orderly, and efficient administration of justice."

"Phil Bancroft of Walnut Creek, vice-president of the northern division of Associated Farmers of California, was introduced as the principal speaker of the evening. He said he believed Kern County farmers at the present time were in better shape than those in many other counties of the state. From this the cry will go up for higher wages, but it must be realized, he said, that the fat years must pay for the lean years in farming. The farmer must stand on his own feet. He takes his lickings when floods and prices lose money for him, he said. But if labor racketeers break him in the fat years, how is the farmer to meet the lean?"

Camp: That is perfect confirmation of my statement that I never belonged to an organization, church or anything, that was founded on sounder and more noble principles than was Associated Farmers.

Baum: Do you recall that meeting?

Camp: Oh yes, I do now. A big group.

Baum: Did a strike come off in '38?

Camp: 1938 is the time I told you that I knew months and weeks ahead of time exactly what was planned, and I told them exactly when it was going to happen. One day, for instance, on a Thursday at the Rotary Club just before the meeting got under way, I tapped a number of people on the shoulder and asked them if they could wait for a few minutes after lunch. So we sat there about fifteen minutes. I related to them what was proposed and what was going to happen--or what was going to be attempted, and where, the exact hour and so on. It was rather strong language to say that, but I had confidence in my informants, complete confidence. And sure enough they tried it.

Baum: What happened?

Camp: We were prepared. They tried to strike at different places. Not me, they didn't dare. I challenged them to strike me. They couldn't pull that off, but neither did they pull these others off. It was during that same fall that the fellow in Washington made an appointment with me for Ella Winter.

Baum: Harry Hopkins, wasn't it? Tell me about the meeting he arranged for her.

Agricultural Committee of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce

Camp: Yes. But first let me answer this note in the outline on the agricultural committee of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce.* The agricultural committee of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce came into being because of this type of attitude in San Francisco--indifference towards the farmers. It was a pretty bad relationship, so John Pickett, who was editor of the Pacific Rural Press, they called it then--now it's called the California Farmer, it's the same paper Dr. Wickson was

*

Bancroft, Philip, "Politics, Farming, and the Progressive Party in California," typed transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted by Willa K. Baum, University of California General Library Regional Cultural History Project, (Berkeley, 1962), pp. 408-414. In Bancroft Library.

Camp: editor of when I first met him at the University--John Pickett, Bancroft, John Lawlor and a few others, and I worked with them, were responsible for organizing the agricultural committee of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, and it did bring about a very fine understanding among all the groups. I'm not sure that Phil Bancroft worked so much, individually, on organizing this committee, though I think he did. He was in all of these kinds of things that he thought helped our country. I had been chairman of the agricultural committee in Fresno for three years.

Baum: It was organized in Fresno before it was in San Francisco, is that what you're saying?

Camp: Yes. Parker Frisselle ahead of me had been instrumental in helping it get started. It was just struggling along. It just fell my good fortune, in connection with that, to be there with the bank and the group asked me to serve as chairman, and I did for three years. The conditions were just right for the committee to become very active and very influential, and today the most influential group in Fresno is that same committee. It meets twice a month. The one in San Francisco was built on the same pattern.

A Meeting with Ella Winter and Friends

Baum: Tell me about the meeting arranged by Harry Hopkins.

Camp: No, it wasn't Harry Hopkins. He was the head of WPA. The California head of WPA with instructions from higher up, (Harry Hopkins) made an appointment with the president of the Associated Farmers in Kern County, it happened to be Bill Camp, for four people. They were going to come to the office right after lunch, and they were there the balance of the afternoon, talking, talking, talking, talking.

What they were talking for and about was why we objected to different people who had been down there trying to organize farm labor. We told them at every turn, every turn, every time, we had no objection whatever, that the workers could join anything they wanted, so long as it was honorable and not subversive.

Camp: I just kept hitting that kind of statement every time, but I quickly got wise to them and I was suspicious when I realized it was Ella Winter. I started a paper around, a yellow pad, and had them all sign their names, write down their address and what they were doing, and when it got back to me, two of them hadn't furnished full information, so I stated it, I said, "You didn't give me all of it." They stumbled over it again and I wrote down what they said. They were working for a paper, one of them for The New Yorker, another one for a magazine that's now not published. As soon as they left I quickly telephoned back there (New York). It was too late to get my message through so I sent wires and I got them back next morning that they didn't know these people. They weren't representing them.

Baum: One of these people was Ella Winter.

Camp: Yes. After she said to me--she married [Donald] Ogden Stewart. He was a Hollywood writer and he wrote for magazines, including a few articles in the Saturday Evening Post, I think, from time to time. But he was a radical writer, he wasn't one of the good loyal American writers at all. The other two women's names I've forgotten.

Baum: What was their purpose? Were they supposedly getting stories?

Camp: They pretended that at first, but it wasn't their purpose, and I soon saw that. It didn't take long to see through what they were there for, and that's why they stayed so long, because I parried everything--I went right back at them with some questions. When I got that paper signed I looked up to Ella Winter and I said, "It's a beautiful place, over there in Carmel, and I love it." That stumped her, to think that I would recognize her and know anything about her. She had failed to write down her address. Her name was Steffens officially. Mrs. Lincoln Steffens. Her deceased husband was a very radical author.

But they were there as representatives and in behalf of all the radical agitators that had been there stirring up trouble among labor. WPA was riddled with it from bottom to top, recognized as such all over America. Lots of good people were in there, because lots of people needed work and you could get a job there. But it was controlled by, directed by, people who don't love America like I do. There's no question about it, and I say that with no reservations. Including Harry Hopkins.

Camp: When Ella Winter, et al, were leaving my office one of them sarcastically asked me, "Did you enjoy your trip to Germany this summer?" They knew I had never been to Germany. However, I had long ago learned that communists tried to accuse others of being Nazi!

More on 1939 Attempted Strike

Baum: You say that several times they tried to strike different places on a hit-and-run strike system, and you knew ahead what they were going to do.

Camp: And where they were going to do it.

Baum: How could you stop them?

Camp: We had our own--and when I say "our own" I don't just mean my farming operations, I mean on another farm a man had been brought in on the picture, alerted to what was about to happen, and his labor had all been talked to--by him, and I was with him sometimes, as in the case of Mindeboro with all his sheep shearers. I was with him night and day for many days, a couple or three weeks. It was a vicious thing. But when those workers themselves were properly informed of what was going on they were just as loyal and just as anxious that the agitators be defeated as we were. So it was a case of--I don't know whether you'd call it public relations or education or communications of the facts, man-to-man, of what was going on.

When you get the facts across, you're armed with a mighty fine weapon, or tool, whatever you want to call it. A weapon to fight with or a tool to stand solidly for rights.

Baum: Was that all that was necessary or did you have to have extra workers available in case the workers did strike?

Camp: We had understanding. It was during that year that all the agitation there was and all the efforts they had made for twelve months, all the preparations--I would say there was practically no stoppage of anything, but I can't honestly

Camp: say there wasn't a little for an hour or so or a half a day or something. I can't say that. But for all practical purposes there was no stoppage of our cotton harvest. There were plenty of people--there were too many. I mean all these migrants had come.

Baum: There were more workers than you could employ.

Camp: Than any of the industries could employ. It was a question of everybody trying to get along, the farmers and the workers. Well, the workers had lived with us--a lot of them in tents, a lot of them had trailers. We bought some tents.

We had a good time together. I constructed a dance pavilion for them and got banjos and fiddles and we would go down with them--not every night, but quite often--and we could have lots of fun down there. Real fun, enjoyment. We erected one place that they could use as a Sunday school and a church and so on--not a fine place but nevertheless adequate for the conditions at that time.

It was a great shock to the agitators and organizers. They couldn't understand why the whole year's preparations fell flat in that part of the valley. Well, they were concentrated down there in '33 and then they skipped for a few years, and in '37 and '38 and mostly in '39--this one in Madera County--they concentrated on that end of the valley, and they were frustrated at every turn they made.

Some of us didn't sleep much sometimes. But there was no violence. My family was threatened every day and night and I had two young boys and their mother. It was taking our lives in our hands, the things some of us did. We weren't out for violence, but we were threatened. We went about our work and looking after the affairs of Associated Farmers, night and day, with no concern about personal safety.

We did work with the constituted authorities, the sheriffs and the policemen, but only on a basis of actual enforcement of laws as already on the books. Nothing against the laborers, nothing for the growers, that wasn't already in line with the regular performance of their duties. Never were they asked to do anything special--except we would alert them if we thought there was likely to be trouble in a certain place at a certain time. We'd tell them about it so they could have somebody there. But they never sided with one or the other and we didn't want them to.

Baum: In the wage hearings that were held in Madera in 1938, the Grange and the Farm Bureau both said that this eighty cent a hundred that was being offered by the Agricultural Labor Bureau was too low, and the Associated Farmers refused to attend--to send a representative to the wage hearing. Do you recall that?

Camp: No, I don't.

Baum: I wondered if there was some difficulty between the Farm Bureau and the Associated Farmers? They usually worked together.

Camp: Yes, but the Associated Farmers, actually, were not set up as a wage-setting body, per pound or per box of anything. They were set up to fight subversives wherever they were. Since there were labor organizations, it would have been an imposition of their ideas in this other field--. Well, they just weren't set up for that, for setting wages. And I don't blame them.

Baum: Then it said that a riot occurred on October 21, 1939, when the farmers and businessmen attacked four hundred strikers attending a meeting. This occurred right after the AF of L had withdrawn assistance from the growers. I wondered what kind of assistance.

Camp: I don't know. In 1939 we were having our problems down there, and most of the activity for organizing and so on had been in the southern end of the valley. I faintly now recall something that took place for a temporary period, a few weeks or something--what was that date? October 21st. They had met with no success in the southern part of the valley, they had hit-and-run again back up here further north. I was not a participant in any of that, that's all I can say.

Living Facilities for Farm Workers

Baum: Did the AF of L have any stand on, oh, living conditions or working conditions to be offered to the workers?

Camp: Oh yes. Well, they wouldn't help a grower until he actually got out and did something, unless he was taking the proper steps to do the things that were right in the way of as good housing as he was able to provide. Certainly water conditions, sanitation conditions, and all those. If a grower was flagrant and absolutely did not co-operate, AF of L did not, could not--it would have been foolish to go out and try to help him. But there weren't many of those. There were some farmers like that--there are still some like that, all over America.

Mrs.

Camp: Here's an article on the subject. August 22, 1939,
 "Kern growers praised for measures to help agricultural labor. This pronouncement on the subject of housing was drafted by the heads of the Kern County Farm Bureau, the Kern County Agricultural Council--"

Camp: This is just what I've been telling you. Go ahead.

Mrs.

Camp: "the Kern County Grange, and the AF of L of Kern County, signed by Walter Hays, W. L. Smith, Frank Stockton, H. E. Woodworth, heads of these organizations, respectively, and the resolution reads: That the farm organizations continue their efforts to get the farmers of this community to supply housing for their permanent and seasonal labor needs, that the county set up the minimum of temporary sanitary facilities where transients and seasonal laborers gather in order to protect public health, that these camps be temporary and eliminated as soon as no longer needed, that these camps be supervised, that the camps and their supervision be handled by local authorities, and we believe the county health department is the proper department to handle this. We do not recommend permanent county, state or federal government camps for housing agricultural labor.

Hugh Jewett, prominent agriculturalist, also expressed the view of many of the farmers of Kern County when he said, "The farmers are advocating drafting a resolution to provide better housing each year for all permanent and seasonable laborers."

Camp: To build it all on our own farms, you see.

Mrs.

Camp: "We advocate so many rooms per family for permanent employees. It can't be done all one year or all one season but it can be done over a three, four, or five year period. Housing can be brought pretty well up to standard."

Mrs.

Camp: C. F. Baughman, head of the sanitary division of the Kern County Health Department, estimates there is housing now in Kern County for approximately two thousand farm laborers, with good camping facilities of a sanitary sort for five thousand additional families, including a number of inexpensive auto camps. The biggest move among the agriculturalists to do something about housing came in 1937, when there were approximately thirty thousand migratory agricultural families squatted about the ditch banks in Kern County."

Camp: And we tried to get them not to come.

Mrs.

Camp: "Responding to the leadership of the health department, the growers co-operated almost 100 per cent. Mr. Boughman estimates that more than ten thousand houses have been erected by the growers of Kern County during the fall of 1937 and the year of 1938, and easily six hundred more have been added this year.

Way back in 1921, Joseph DiGiorgio built the first houses for farm laborers on his ranch, one of the most famous in California and one that practically every migrant worker aspired to work for. Considered a model of its kind, the DiGiorgio farm, located near Arvin, housed year 'round more farm workers than any similar ranch in Kern County, due to the diversification of crops worked by its owner. It supplies year 'round labor so that approximately 1850 workers and their families are housed there permanently."

COTTON IN CALIFORNIA--LABOR IN THE 1940's
(April 3, 1963--morning session)

"Strike" Against DiGiorgio Farms, 1947-1949

Baum: I know you were close to Mr. DiGiorgio in 1947 when the so-called strike against the DiGiorgio Farms began. How did that come about?

Camp: Well, Mr. DiGiorgio back in the early forties, no, it was 1939, asked me to join with him in a potato venture, growing potatoes as a commercial crop. He was mostly vineyards and orchards and for some reason he wanted to get into potatoes. He and I discussed it, agreed, and very quickly we had a sizeable acreage of potatoes--some two thousand acres--separate and apart from our own operations.

Baum: You formed a partnership.

Camp: Yes, fifty-fifty. I did everything and paid all operating costs, billing him monthly for his half. Also I harvested and sold all products, remitting his one-half monthly. It turned out to be very profitable for both of us. I contributed my supervision without salary. I already had my own operations, and I felt this was not a great burden to handle. Mr. DiGiorgio and I had a good partnership, as well as a very pleasant personal relationship.

I believe it was following our first year's operations that Mr. DiGiorgio said to me, "Bill, I'm very pleased and happy that you accepted my invitation to join me in this potato operation. We had no experience in potatoes but I'd heard a great deal about you and I thought we might try potatoes if I could get you to join with us. The operation has been successful beyond my best expectation. I will this year pay a cash dividend to my stockholders for the first time in several years. In addition to that you and I have come to know each other personally and I'm delighted with the product."

Baum: How long did you continue?

Camp: We discontinued that particular arrangement sometime in the mid-forties--the exact date I've forgotten. Even though we were making money and Mr. DiGiorgio and I became warm and close friends--the time came that I wished to spend more of my time with my own sons and our personal operations. Mr. DiGiorgio and I remained close friends as is evidenced by our close co-operation in the so-called DiGiorgio Farm labor strike, 1947-1950.

On October 1, 1947, an outside goon squad came in, brought in by the AFL-CIO, and they planted a picket line around the DiGiorgio headquarters. They centered their operations mostly around his original operations. His laborers did not go on strike. The picket line was planted there by an outside group. Approximately two and a half years the picket line walked, and walked and walked. No labor trouble on the ranch at any time, none. It was guided and paid for from the outside--all the pickets were paid for by the AF of L and the CIO.

Baum: I had read that it was the National Farmers Union, which was unaffiliated.

Camp: Well, my statement is correct, but the original group was only known as the one that you said, National Farmers Union, and the head of it was H. L. Mitchell. (See Congressional Record 1938--782592-24690). Mitchell turned out to be--and as soon as I heard it I recognized him as being the same Mitchell that I had dealings with when I was in Washington. He was the agitator who had come up from the deep South from the sharecroppers union or Southern Tenant Farmers Union. (Formed and named by communists) He was the same Mitchell. I knew, from my dealings with him in '34, '5 and '6, considerable about Brother Mitchell. He was not interested in any individual at all, at least not as a laborer, nor in his welfare, he was interested only in agitation, fomenting trouble. Having that knowledge myself I had no hesitancy in joining with Mr. DiGiorgio to say, "All right, we'll see what we can do about this. We cannot have him and his cohorts coming in and taking over, because it would be complete ruin."

At first the railroad workers didn't want to cross the picket line there going into the packing shed, but that was finally worked out and didn't cause too much trouble. In fact railroad officials operated the switch trains in

Camp: and out of the packing shed for several days.

Baum: Did the railway workers feel this was an affiliated union?

Camp: I'm not familiar enough with their inside workings to answer that one. They just didn't want to cross the picket line until they knew more about it. But as soon as all the facts were known we didn't have much more trouble with any of the regular organized people.

But as this thing dragged on, week after week, month after month, the national organization of AF of L and CIO did put money into it and they did give it their blessings officially. A fellow named Hank Hasiwar lived at the El Tejon Hotel in Bakersfield with his women friends and so on, and he was a local spokesman, agitator, for the national organization. Mitchell was only the nominal national head of this bunch of hoodlums. I'm saying then and now he wasn't smart enough to plan anything with any kind of common business sense, but he was a stooge for somebody else.

Charges Against DiGiorgio Farms Made by Harold Ickes:

Brochure Prepared in Answer

Camp: Now, coming back, the picket line walked and it walked. On Thanksgiving day of 1947, which would be some eight weeks after the picket line started, I received a telephone call from Cully Cobb from Atlanta, Georgia, asking me if I'd seen Harold Ickes' column in the papers. It appeared on Thanksgiving. I said no, and he said, "I'll send it to you. He attacks you folks in a big way."

I went out and was able to buy a paper that had it in it, and through the mail I received it with a letter from Mr. Cobb giving his opinion of it as he read it at that end.

Well, immediately I took that article of Harold Ickes' and used that as a basis of educational material, and we got together with some of our folks, including an attorney, to make sure that we were legal in everything we did, and

Camp: we decided to prepare a brochure using Ickes' column. Going right through it, every charge he made we put down, "Ickes says," and we stated what he accused us of, a page for each one, and under that we said, "The facts are..."

A committee was selected from our group and they went out to the DiGiorgio ranch and took a commercial photographer with them. I said, "Now that this thing has reached this stage, let's be sure we've got a community committee, many of you who don't know anything specifically about conditions out there, and take a photographer and whatever it is, whether it's regarding churches or living conditions or schools, look at the charge and get all the pictures, all the facts you can, and support every fact with a picture, or pertinent statistics. Let's see what kind of a story it makes."

You're never sure how that kind of thing is going to turn out, but certainly it was as fair-minded and fine a cross section of people as you could have got. I believe that they elected the publisher of the newspaper to serve as chairman of the committee.

Well, they took pictures of the houses, and when it came to the wages and what-have-you they had whole families' wages, they got the canceled checks and took pictures of them and pictures of the families--they made a complete documented record of all of Ickes' charges. Every one turned out to be a lie. Of course we knew it was when we read it, but we wanted to see what we could show.

Mrs.

Camp: When you say "they," you were the spearhead for all of that, and worked all these plans out.

Camp: Well, only in a general way. Even so, I felt that I should not go with the committee to the ranch.

The brochure did and does picture the thing absolutely accurately. We still defy anyone, anywhere, any organization, to prove that the facts as presented in the brochure were wrong. We used the brochure two years later when the investigating committee came out from Congress. It so happened that Nixon was one of the members of that investigating committee, he was a congressman then. All the facts were presented, and quickly accepted by the congressmen. It took them a day or so, but they couldn't decide any other way.

It is true that as soon as this brochure was printed,

Camp: I sent one to Ickes, registered, airmail, and Ickes had to personally sign to get it, and he signed the card and it came back to me. And then he wrote another column, admitting that he got this brochure, said it was prepared by one man in California--didn't mention the man's name--and he said he did a good job, fine paper and everything, and then he cut loose and blasted us the same way again--maybe worse.

Baum: He took issue with the brochure?

Camp: Oh yes. Well, he didn't specifically pick out things in the brochure, because he couldn't, but he just took off, bla-bla-bla, as he always did anyway.

As a result of this second column, and after many months, the newspapers were then written a letter. (There are a lot of things I'll have to go back and pick up. There was a moving picture involved.) A letter went to each newspaper that carried Ickes' column and the letter said in essence, "You're undoubtedly familiar with these two articles with the charges that Ickes has made"--the brochure went into that too. "So we now give you three choices: Either have Ickes, on the front page, apologize, admitting that all this is false, that he was wrong, or take him out of your paper, never to appear again, or you'll be sued for a million dollars." I think the records will show that Ickes never appeared again in a newspaper, anywhere--at least this column. So much for that.

That again to me proves a point. It's my philosophy in life, not only regarding these kinds of things, when our public, grass roots on up all across the board, know all the facts and believe them--they're presented in such a way that they do believe them--these agitators are not going to get by with these things. We tried to tell that story in such a way that it could not be doubted, and those newspapers saw that this was so.

Baum: It was a syndicated column?

Camp: Oh yes. The letters and statements were all properly drawn, of course, by legal counsel. At no time did any of us ever get excited. You had to stay with it and present the facts at all times.

However, stepping back some, as soon as this brochure

Camp: was published, the committee--well, as soon as it was published a picket line was formed outside that newspaper. The publisher was the chairman of the committee. I don't see that walking in front of a newspaper is any worse than picketing the harvesting of grapes and peaches and so on, but anyway this fellow, a friend of mine, I thought, he called quickly and he said, "Look what you've got me into. I'm all through with it, they're picketing my paper."

I then said, "You went into it with your eyes open. I didn't ask you to do it, I asked if you would like to serve, and you said, "Yes, gladly." So, don't blame me. I just presented all the facts I had and I'm continuing to."

Well, that is only typical of what has been happening, and is still happening, all over America, in matters of this kind. That's what I don't understand. When agitators or racketeers come around and call your truckdrivers or something, why, people get scared and run.

This whole committee kind of faded out of the picture. They were businessmen and they were afraid that they would be hurt. Some of them were farmers, many of them weren't; it was a cross section of Kern County people. But they'd done nothing but present facts so they had nothing to be ashamed of--except they didn't want the pickets out in front of their business. That to me was and is, always has been, a sad state of affairs when people won't continue to stand up and fight and be counted. But we had to carry on. You cannot compromise in a case like that.

Camp Refuses to Deal with Labor Agitators

Camp: One day in the early part of it, before this brochure was developed--it wasn't developed until after Thanksgiving, a few days after the picket line was formed, on a Thursday I was going into a hotel for a Rotary meeting and as I walked by the desk going to the dining room a fellow stepped out from behind the post and confronted me, a stranger, and says, "You're Bill Camp, aren't you?"

I said, "Yes."

Camp: He quickly got to talking about the picket line, he called it a "strike," and if I refer to it as a strike anywhere I want to make sure you understand there was no strike. I may let a slip of the tongue. They called it a strike all the time, and the newspapers called it a strike. It was never a strike.

Baum: But the laborers themselves were not on strike?

Camp: Never. Never. They did plant two or three, maybe, a few more in the laboring force a day or two ahead of time, and when the agitator leaders gave the signal these walked out. But we traced that quickly to plants. There were goons brought in and planted in the field. There was one, or two, who had worked for the ranch quite some time before. I don't know whether they'd been fired or what, but they were sore at somebody.

Now, this fellow confronted me and after a little bit of conversation he said, "Why don't we get together and call off this picket line out here?"

I said, "Why, I've got nothing to do with it."

He said, "Oh yes, you have."

I said, "No. It's there at Mr. DiGiorgio's headquarters. Why do you think I have anything to do with it?"

He said, "You can call it off, you can stop it."

Of course this was a racketeer talking. His statement was completely false, I had no authority of any kind. We hadn't developed any procedure yet. It was true that Mr. DiGiorgio and I understood and trusted each other. But that developed a pattern; they were after me all the time to intercede.

Baum: Did they have any offers to make? Why?

Camp: Except that I had been president of Associated Farmers and had led the battle against racketeers on several earlier attempts to cripple farmers.

Baum: I wondered what kind of bargain they would make to take the pickets off?

Camp: I wouldn't even sit down. The point is, in a case like that,

Camp: a man is very foolish--I started to say that no sensible man would sit down at that stage of the game and talk to anybody he didn't know, because they're trying to stampede you into something. You can't sit down and bargain with a bunch of strangers who you wonder why they came on the scene.

DiGiorgio Makes a Movie to Show His Farm

Camp: They had sent out pictures all over America, of the bad housing conditions on the DiGiorgio farm, and one little leaning house that appeared in a national magazine seemed to make quite an impression on a lot of people. They sent out articles and false statements, and then they made a moving picture purportedly of conditions in operation on the DiGiorgio farm. The picture was false, all the statements in it were lies. The only truth in it was that there was a DiGiorgio farm and there is a Kern County and there is a California. I'm not being facetious. All the statements were essentially the same as those in Grapes of Wrath; they were all false, as to the why of their coming and the way we treated them.

Well, this movie was narrated by a well-known commentator--Ed Murrow. It was shown all over America, to every audience. It was so bad and had created such a stir--people weren't going to come out here and look for themselves, and most of them were still unwilling to believe, I guess, a brochure prepared by a rancher. But another movie had to be made, and it showed facts. I challenge anybody to prove that any picture or any statement in it wasn't right.

Baum: It was paid for by DiGiorgio?

Camp: That's right. But the falsehoods in this other picture, you don't always catch up with them. We called for a congressional hearing.

Baum: Did Associated Farmers stand by DiGiorgio through this?

Camp: Oh yes. But Associated Farmers at that date were not as

Camp: active statewide as they had been in the early days. They didn't have a big staff. They had one field man, an Italian name, Jack Rossi, I believe. A fine young man. They did nothing but what we asked them to, to get certain information, and it was only in that capacity that they did anything.

We asked the Farm Bureau people to do some things--just like this committee at the beginning went out and gathered facts. The individual businessmen were unwilling, though, to stick by us, so some of us had to carry it to all of California. In a speech, "You Can't Eat Red Tape" before the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, in February, 1952, I told them that not one single newspaper, not one single radio commentator in California, had been willing to stand up and tell the facts, the true facts. They made on the radio every false statement, many false statements, that were handed to them by these agitators, but for some reason they seemed unwilling to present the other side. But the brochure spoke for itself, and people might not accept it and believe it, but they didn't dare argue with the facts.

It wasn't long after the hearing that this outfit (AFL-CIO) folded, because the hearing went against them. They were sued then by Mr. DiGiorgio, and he won and they paid, presumably a dollar, and apologized and agreed in the suit that they would never use that picture again.

About two years ago there was a strike on cherries, and they (the AFL-CIO) showed this picture again and they were quickly sued by DiGiorgio--Mr. DiGiorgio, Sr. had died, but his estate sued them. DiGiorgio collected a fine of about \$75,000.

Comments on California State Employment Service

Baum: Did the State Employment Service refer workers to the DiGiorgio farm during this time? Or did they hold it as a labor dispute and refuse to?

Camp: At first they held it as a labor dispute. I can't answer that one; it wasn't of any importance because the labor was

Camp: still there and they were able to get labor. It wasn't a matter of State Employment Service or no. I might say that I have never used the State Employment Service one single time to get ranch help. Whether other farmers feel they've got to have it I don't know.

Baum: Workers just come and apply by themselves?

Camp: Apply, or you know where some are and you go and get them, or we put out an ad. We've never been dependent on state service to get our workers. I'm not belittling it at all.

Baum: Well, it's always an issue in a strike. If it's called a labor dispute the employment service is forbidden by law to refer workers.

Camp: Yes. It's up to the state people themselves to determine, in their judgment, whether it's a strike or not. Quite often we know that they have been people who were, to say the least, quite sympathetic to the agitators who were coming around trying to unionize, organize. There have been too many of them who have leaned over backwards to say, "Well, I'm afraid it's a strike." For that reason I have never leaned on it at all.

Once they asked me to serve as a committeeman, mostly concerning Mexican nationals, and I agreed. I've never used any Mexican nationals, and sitting on the committee I recommended several times that they be denied to certain growers who asked for them, because in those cases they just didn't need them, any more than I did. But there were other cases, such crops and so on, where they did need them and I recommended them.

Baum: When you say they didn't need them, you mean there were sufficient domestic workers available?

Camp: Yes, and it was for crops...in that area there were plenty of workers available, living in the town. Now there were a couple of growers--we farmers are rather proud of our housing situation, and they didn't have the proper setup. I'm not talking about DiGiorgio, I'm talking about two others. They are not farming, went broke. None of their setup was done right, including the getting of help.

Joseph DiGiorgio

- Baum: I don't often see DiGiorgio's name on committees. Did he take an active role in farm organizations?
- Camp: Yes, he did, but he had so many activities that he himself couldn't sit many times as a named committeeman, and that's understandable. He wasn't in California all the time at all, because he had operations in New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and in Florida.
- Baum: Did he have a manager for his whole farming works here?
- Camp: He had different operations, one at Arvin--where this [picket line] was, another one at Delano, another one at Marysville, one in Stockton. He had a resident manager on each one. His nephews were around, and still are, and they're operating the businesses now. He had no children. He was a very brilliant man, a very fine businessman.
- Baum: Did you--all the farmers in the area--come in contact with him much? Was he part of the community?
- Camp: He wanted to be and was, made himself a part of the community when he was there. All people who knew him well were very fond of him, because he was a very gentle soul and a very generous individual. He contributed to all the community activities--whether it be music or anything.
- Baum: He must have been awfully sharp and aware of what was going on in agriculture.
- Camp: Very sharp. He had one of the keenest minds. It was a pleasure to sit with him.
- Baum: You've mentioned from time to time the manager of the Kern County Land Company, who seemed to be a very moving force in your community. Did Mr. DiGiorgio's resident managers--were they as permanent and well established in the community?
- Camp: No. No, because Mr. DiGiorgio himself--he had good managers from the standpoint of running the operations, and they took part in local activities some, but statewide and community-wide Mr. DiGiorgio himself was the dominant factor. He was that type of personality--not that they were afraid of him in any way, but he overshadowed them. Those of us who knew

Camp: him as friends and were not on the payroll were not afraid of the big bad wolf. He wasn't a wolf, anyway.

Baum: He was an Italian immigrant, wasn't he?

Camp: Yes. He had a pushcart, I guess, about the same as Giannini did before he started the Bank of Italy. But he became the dominant force in the United Fruit Company. There's a book written on him. He controlled, pretty much, all the bananas that came into America for a period of time.

Living Facilities on Camp Farms in 1949

Baum: Can you think of any points we've forgotten to cover during the thirties or forties?

Camp: Along toward the end of this two and a half years, the head of the state organization [of the AFL-CIO] and the secretary and the attorney and two or three other men, stooges, I guess, asked to come to my house. They came up from Los Angeles and they sat there and talked and talked and talked, and wanted to know why we wouldn't sit down and bargain with them.* I said, "We have no labor troubles."

They stayed from right after lunch till--oh, quite a while, two and a half to three hours, and they got hotter and hotter, and I didn't get hot, wouldn't. The other man, my witness, was a local businessman. He did no talking at all.

I did not know why they had so many for this interview, and during the course of the discussion I did have a few thoughts about hoodlums and what they might try to do, but I didn't let them know it. As I look back and think what is happening elsewhere, I realize that I perhaps should have had other protection in the house.

* Mr. W. G. Bassett, executive secretary of the one-half million member Los Angeles County Labor Federation, AFL-CIO--the nation's largest central labor body. With Mr. Bassett were Mr. Ranford, president, Mr. Bates, Mr. Schulman, district council, Mr. Harry Lee. Also Mr. George Schullenburger and Mr. Daugherty, attorney.

Camp: Mr. Bassett made a statement and then more statements, and more charges, and he got hotter and hotter, and I said, "Well, you know that's not the fact."

With this Bassett jumped up and said, "I'm not interested in the facts. All I'm interested in is organizing these workers down here on this ranch."

I said, "I knew it. I knew you were not interested in facts."

At this point I got up and went to the front door and opened it very deliberately, and I said, "Gentlemen, here's the door. We've given you a hearing on a sensible basis and now you come out with a statement confirming what we actually knew, namely, that the facts don't mean anything to you. I'm saying to you, very simply, but most emphatically, don't come back until you are willing to talk facts." So they left.

Some week or two later, I got a telephone call from Mr. Bassett in Los Angeles. He wanted to come back. He wanted me to designate somebody to go with him in his car out to the ranch and ride around while his cameraman was taking pictures.

I said, "Fine, bring your camera and come to my house alone. I'll go with you myself. You can take any pictures you want, see anything you want."

He didn't like that, but he came, and when he came, two days later, we got in my car and drove out, and on the way out to the farm we stopped at Weedpatch Corner, we called it--where John Steinbeck lived in the government camp and gathered his dirt against those good migrant people for that damnable book, Grapes of Wrath.

Well, I stopped at Weedpatch Corner (for a special reason, as you will discover). I drove out to the cottages and stopped in front of one.

I said, "You see that cabin there?" It was one room, leaning.

He said, "Yes."

I said, "Now, you might want to take a picture of that."

Camp: It may have flashed into his mind he had seen the picture of that hut.

I said, "Well, now read your speedometer." He did, and I said, "Write it down." I started the car and drove on.

I stopped after about ten minutes and I said, "Read the speedometer again." He did. I said, "Now subtract one from the other." It was three miles.

I said, "This is the beginning of the ranch." The cabin was three miles back. "The cabin back yonder is the one you people had in the national magazines all over America, saying that it was on the ranch, and that's where the labor was living." (The article also said that all the labor was living in similar quarters.)

There was nothing more to say about that. These were facts and he knew it. So he went on, and I get the manager of the farm--I didn't have him alerted at all, because I wanted it that way. He got in the car with us and I said, "He wants to go by some of the cottages, the living quarters."

He said, "Well, which?" They had several labor camps around the ranch.

I said, "Let's see these near headquarters first."

So we drove into one, and I stopped in the middle of the cottages and I said, "Fellow, Mr. Bassett, you want to take some pictures?"

He said, "No."

"These are the living quarters here; I thought you wanted to take pictures."

These were nice little cottages, with every accommodation that anybody in the world would want--green lawns, everything nicely taken care of, trees. We went by a swimming pool, we went by a tennis court, and we went on then for about two miles to another cluster of cottages (labor camp), and again he didn't want to take any pictures. We went to a third one; again he didn't want to take pictures. Actually, they were all pretty much alike--very nice accommodations.

So, O.K. It was about noon. The labor was out in the

Camp: fields, no shortage of help of any kind, no disturbance. There was no disturbance anywhere by ranch employees, and after all these months it was recognized as a silly, asinine performance on their part by everybody--except them! But the AF of L and CIO were still pouring money into it. Hasiwar and his women were still at the El Tejon Hotel.

The ranch manager, a Mr. Little, said, "Do you want to go back through the sleeping quarters where the single men live?"

"Yes."

I said, "By the way, it's about dinner time. Do you have room for a couple of us to eat?"

He said, "Sure." So we went right in with the rest of the help, sat down, and I doubt if this fellow had ever, before or since, eaten a more nutritious, better, more tasty meal--. Well, I shouldn't say that, but it was as good as anybody, any king, would want. And he admitted it.

So we went outside, and as we went to thank the manager and tell him goodbye, I said in his (the ranch manager's) presence, "Now I'm going to tell this man something and I want you to listen. I haven't the slightest idea about any figures, any details, exactly, that I'm talking about, but--" and I looked at this man and I said, "this is the proposition I want to make. You came around, saw the cabin three miles back, saw the ones here, and refused to take pictures. You've seen these people, had a meal. Now I will make you a proposition, the statement that the wages of the people on this ranch, and I'll include any other good ranches, well-operated ranches, in the San Joaquin Valley, that the keep money that these people make, money that you can take out of your pocket and spend for your family, if it isn't at least 25 per cent more than the average wages of all the department stores in California, then I'll join the union and I'll go out with you as the chief organizer."

I said, "I have no figures, nobody's ever made a statement to me, I'm pulling it out of the air. I've nothing to back it up except my common sense."

He said, "That's quite a statement."

I said, "You prove me wrong--compare all the things these people have and don't have to spend for, and the money

Camp: they can keep, with what the clerk in the store has to pay and what she or he has to keep and take home."

That was the end of him, and his organization, appealing to us to sit down with them.

Baum: What year did you say this was?

Camp: It started October 1st, 1947, so two years would be October, 1949. It was bound to have been between then and six months later.

Baum: They were picketing your ranch?

Camp: No. DiGiorgio and I were partners on this potato venture, and my ranch was a long ways from that, but we got some land near Arvin, California, on the outskirts of his vineyards, to put into potatoes.

Baum: On these potato lands you didn't have living quarters, did you?

Camp: Oh yes. We constructed labor quarters very quickly. I bought many refrigerator cars from the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe; they were wooden ones and the railroads were constructing new steel ones. Originally when I started I purchased a train of them, about seventy-five cars. Steinbeck accused us, that was one of his charges in Grapes of Wrath, that we farmers were making people live in boxcars like cattle.

Well, all right, the charge may be correct, but my wife and our two sons and I were living in the same boxcars, if you want to call them that. They were really all refrigerator cars, fixed up comfortably, and all had bathroom facilities, hot and cold water, every basic convenience that all homes have. They were the warmest in winter and the coolest in summer that anybody had, and there was no discomfort. My son, Bill Jr., and his family live in that same house now. They have improved it a bit, but really I don't know a more comfortable home anywhere. It's good looking too!

Baum: The single men took board and room, I suppose. Did the family men board?

Camp: No, the family men had their own cottages, nice little cottages. I wish that I had had the same kind of cottage when my mother and father and eight other children and I

Camp: were in South Carolina. We had no bathrooms nor hot water, except what we heated in the kettle on the stove. All the families that have worked with us in California have better facilities than I ever had--and my mother and father had--until twelve or fifteen years after I finished Clemson. That doesn't say nor mean that anybody else ought to have the same conditions we had. Though I must again say that no family of ten could ever be happier, nor healthier than we. None of us were ever really sick and my parents lived to a ripe age. Dad left us at ninety-nine.

Baum: Are most of your workers fairly permanent?

Camp: Yes, most of them are. A few prefer to live in other parts of the state and come back for harvests every year.

Baum: They work all year 'round, or come back every year?

Camp: Both. There are certain people who, by nature, prefer to follow crops than to stay and work in different crops in one area. Some of them say they're on vacation all the time, like people who travel over Europe from one country to another. But there are lots of families now who were migratory workers years ago who have bought or built their homes in little towns and communities nearby and they prefer to live there. Those people, some of them, go out to ranches from the town, but more than that are people who go out with their families and work in the harvest, you might say on a contract basis. But they have permanent homes of their own. Most all of our folks have been with us since we started. They're some of the finest people in the world. I defy anybody to get them to leave us.

Same thing is true of all of the good operators, not just us. There are some, as we must well know, people in California, and it's true in Texas and New York and everywhere else, who will if they can take advantage of somebody. But basically I know that all our good farmers do everything they can to make life happy for their workers. It's not only good sense--but it's good business to treat everyone fairly.

Baum: Is there any effort by any farm organization to, let's say, police the industry--to try and get the farmers that are giving the industry a black eye to square away their living conditions?

Camp: Yes, from time to time--well, we have a code of ethics set up. I wouldn't say that they have somebody out policing,

Camp: not that, but if they hear of somebody, a committee meeting of farmers, neighbors--.

Baum: Yes, I suppose a few farmers could make a very bad situation for everyone.

Camp: That's right. That's true of society all across America. We hear of the bad ones, not the good ones.

Cost of "Strike" to Mr. DiGiorgio

Camp: This two and a half years was a long struggle.

Baum: You felt that it sort of killed Joseph DiGiorgio.

Camp: Oh, it brought his death. Of course I can't prove that, but there is no doubt at all in my mind, there's no doubt in his wife's mind, that this brought his death much quicker than it should have come, because frankly, specifically, he and I carried it along. His employees helped him to bear a lot of things, but I'm talking about independent people. He and I. It was a struggle.

Baum: It sounds like you took it very calmly.

Camp: I did.

Baum: Did he seem more upset about it?

Camp: Yes. Those people, his nationality, are more excitable than you or I, probably, and he did get excited quite often. I think all of that nationality get terribly excited when they're trying to do something. His blood pressure would-- I would think something would happen to him any minute, he would get so terribly excited. I can fight better when I'm not too excited. I'm not saying it was a battle of arms, but of ideas.

Baum: The movie you made was a big expense, wasn't it?

Camp: Oh yes. DiGiorgio paid for that.

Baum: Didn't any farm organization chip in on it?

Camp: No, sir. He paid for that himself. It was a great expense. These others, the brochure and so on, some of us paid much of that. That was a few thousand dollars, as against many, many thousands of dollars. But it seemed necessary. Of course, throughout all of this I donated my time and paid all my own expenses, automobiles and everything. Not just to help Mr. DiGiorgio, but for the benefit of all--including my own family and business operations--which was and is agriculture.

But people would just run, they'd do nothing. And I mean nothing. I'm talking about the people who were around us. There are a lot of good people down here, awful fine people on matters like getting the one-variety and things that don't have picket lines, that don't endanger them or their business. But there's so many people who are afraid of a business failure or something.

Labor During World War II

Baum: I wanted to ask you how was the labor situation during the war? Were you able to get workers?

Camp: During the war it was a different story. Nearly everybody did everything they could. We got a lot of help from town, believe it or not, people who'd never worked any. Women folks, college folks. Some schools would let out early and school children would help harvest. However, I remember during the war one speech made by a school principal before a Rotary club. He condemned farmers for the idea of asking a school to close one hour early to let children out to help harvest. Education was more important. Of course, I agree with him--except in emergencies. I don't mean that in emergencies you don't need education, but you've got to survive before--.

Baum: You've got to eat or you can't work.

Camp: Yes. So we had a tussle, and forevermore he and I have been at daggers' points because he has a philosophy I don't share.

Baum: Was there any union activity during the war?

Camp: Yes, there was, but it wasn't as noticeable. That didn't bother us much, on the farms. At least I don't recall it.

Baum: Wages were so high during the war, I know, for unskilled labor.

Camp: People worked on ranches during the war not to get bigger wages than they could get somewhere else, but a lot of them were convinced that this was something that had to be done. It is true, regardless of the rantings of anybody, that farmers like to pay good wages. Would like to pay good wages, and we do pay good wages, based on what we get for our produce. But whenever farmers get more they are so happy to pay more--a lot of people don't believe that. Steinbeck didn't believe it--he did, but he lied to the public about all the facts.

Baum: Well, during the war you got good prices for your products, I think, so I suppose the wages could go up.

Camp: The wages did go up, a lot of piece work, you see.

Baum: Well, I'm sure it wasn't equivalent to what you could get in the shipyards.

Camp: Oh no. Lord, no.

There is much more that could be filled in on that two-and-a-half year picket line, but I think perhaps you've got all the essential facts. It was a vicious thing.

Baum: There never was any violence, was there?

Camp: Yes, at the beginning there was some violence on the part of these outside goon squads. Some people were beaten up by them. Then there was some faked violence. In other words, the agitators were trying to prove--trying to get sympathy.

That was a picket line of all picket lines, and having had a part in it is nothing to be proud of. It was a sad two and a half years. But right now I'd be ashamed of myself if I hadn't done as much as I knew how to do to help head off chaos. Because, all those people were after, and I've stated it over and over again, they are determined some day, somehow--Walter Reuther and all of them--to get complete control of America's breadbasket and fight with that.

Camp: If and when they can have complete unionization of farm workers, a closed shop, then that day they don't need any other unions. They can starve everybody to death overnight. If people will just see through this, sit down and talk to themselves. It would be the most vicious thing that could ever happen to America.

COTTON IN CALIFORNIA--LABOR IN THE 1950's and 1960's
(April 3, 1963--afternoon session)

Philip Bancroft, Parker Frisselle, and Ralph Taylor

Baum: Before I turned the recorder on, you said that there were three people who you could always count on to be in agreement with you. One was Phil Bancroft...

Camp: Well, maybe that will sound a little bit ego on my part. I recognized them and respected those three individuals so very much that I only wished myself that I had the ability to do and think as they did. Because of my respect for them I was willing at all times to go along with them.

Phil Bancroft, on all matters and at all times. And Parker Frisselle was similar--I'm talking completely about the business world, the world in which I operated business-wise.

And the third one was Ralph Taylor, who has now retired but was and is one of the best agricultural economists in the country. He helped organize all the agriculture co-ops in California. Ralph Taylor was the general manager or executive vice-president of Agricultural Council of California and was one of the keenest agricultural thinkers we had in this state or in the nation. He had his office in Sacramento, and one of his jobs was watching any tricky legislation that somebody might try to slip in dangerous to agriculture, or to business in general--or to the consumers.

Baum: When did you first meet him?

Camp: Oh, shortly after I came to California, and then over all the years we worked very closely.

Baum: Was he from Kern County?

Camp: No. I don't know where he originally was from, but I'm sure he was a teacher in a college somewhere before he was

Camp: persuaded to take over this other assignment by these co-ops. I attended many agricultural meetings over the state at which I'd see him in action; his thoughts and mine were always very much the same. All these fellows were quicker thinkers than I. I've left many meetings at which one of them was in attendance, and I'd say, "All right, vote for me too." Those are the only three people I've ever done that to. There are a lot of other folks who are just as fine friends of mine, but I wouldn't give them that particular assignment.

Drive to Organize Agricultural Workers, 1959-1960

Baum: You were speaking before I turned on the recorder about the 1947 to 1949 labor disputes, and I believe there was a long lull in which there was very little labor difficulty, and then in 1959 the AFL-CIO set up headquarters in Stockton with the aim of organizing the workers.

Camp: That's right. This two and a half year (October 1, 1947 to spring of 1950) picket line in Kern County that we've been talking about--the final outcome of that was a terrible blow to all of the racketeers who had been trying to organize the farm workers--not for the benefit of the workers, but for the dollars that would come into the headquarters of these unions.

But it was that set-back that caused them to lay off in California, and their intention nationally has been all the time to organize farm laborers in California first, because they feel that that is the most mechanized, industrial agriculture, the most scientific agriculture, and if they can once get a number of ranchers under their control here then they'll go through the states with no trouble. Having California, they'd wrap up the whole thing.

This little farmers' organization over in the Midwest last year, when they withheld cattle and hogs from the market, the true story there is--the mastermind of that is Walter Reuther. They've gone so far as to admit that he gave them considerable money for organizing purposes for the good of the cause! Well, that's just part of the story.

Baum: I did read that there were many crop losses in 1960 due to picketing.

Camp: Individual growers did lose some crops, yes.

Baum: This was due to this drive by the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee.

Camp: Which was financed by the AFL-CIO.

Baum: Right, and their leader was Norman Smith. I wondered if you had run into Norman Smith.

Camp: No. Norman Smith kept out of Kern County.

Baum: He was a former Arkansas school teacher.

Camp: Yes. I too was a school teacher at one time but how good a one I was I'm not sure. But Norman Smith would simply apply to the AFL-CIO, give them a budget. But don't forget, this two-and-a-half year picket line, all of them had lost it and they shied away from Kern County and haven't come back yet. And we down there, unless invited to come up to other counties for some emergency, we stay there. It's very much better for the people involved to handle their own affairs within the area. Again, that furnishes complete proof that it's not something that's being promulgated from outside by some other growers.

Baum: I read that twenty farmer groups had joined together to form what they called the California Farmers Emergency Food Committee to fight this drive. Do you know about that?

Camp: In '59?

Baum: '59 and '60, yes, when these sporadic strikes occurred.

Camp: I did not attend any of the meetings, and all I know is probably not much more than anyone else would know from the papers. Although I have talked to a lot of those farmers who operated in those areas and I have their version of it. But I have no firsthand information.

Baum: I wondered why it wasn't Associated Farmers that would handle that. Is Associated Farmers very active now?

Camp: They are in existence but not real active, as they were way

Camp: back yonder. Again, it's a matter of personalities. In the early days we had Stu Strathman as executive secretary and manager and Phil Bancroft and a number of others who were very active in their own areas. But the very fact that there was that inactivity during those years just about makes it impossible, shouldn't be but it is, for an organization--even though it has done a lot of good, it has to be financed, and people forget very quickly.

Baum: Is Associated Farmers still active enough that it has a framework of, oh, a setup so that it could become active?

Camp: I think so. Depends, again, entirely on the person involved.

Baum: Do they have officers?

Camp: I haven't attended one of their meetings in many years. They're not active in many counties but they do have a state organization, with a president and a secretary-treasurer. They elected a new president last year, I read in the paper.

Baum: Do they have a publication?

Camp: They put out newsletters. Charley Gibbs, in San Francisco, is the paid manager of it and I assume he has one or two field men. Whether they're on full time I don't know.

But we haven't had need for any organization like that in Kern County for so long, it's difficult to get out and get growers to support it. The Farm Bureau is set up for many other functions; the Associated Farmers was set up for a very firm purpose, to fight communism in agriculture. But we don't have so much of that activity right now, so Associated Farmers have had difficulty raising money. And agriculture itself has not had the money in past years. Individual growers have not been making the money as they did.

Baum: I heard that the Associated Farmers were thinking of a sort of insurance system whereby each grower would take out insurance, and if his ranch was struck he wouldn't lose all his investment.

Camp: Yes. I was advised of that also and it has a lot of good points. I have not participated in it, I don't know whether it's been activated, but if they get it going I'm not sure

- Camp: but what it might be very advantageous. I did understand that the California Farm Bureau itself had undertaken a similar plan. It wouldn't be a bad idea.
- Baum: Do you think farmers would take out that kind of insurance? Or would they wait until their farm was struck and then--?
- Camp: That's the difficulty. I'm merely saying that we could be interested if the fee wasn't too high. Farmers have to watch their pennies these days, they're not making the money they used to, none of them. And they weren't making an awful lot then, but it's nip and tuck now as the whether they make anything.
- Baum: I had heard that in the 1959 and 1960 drive that the ranchers did raise wages as a result of the picketing. This was not in your part of the state. But the one thing they were adamant against was recognition of the union.
- Camp: As the bargaining agent. Yes. They didn't care if the labor joined unions, but they did not wish, and cannot afford to recognize the present type of union as bargaining agent because when the plums and cherries and what-have-you are ripe, they have to be harvested. You don't have time to sit down. It's absolutely impossible.
- Baum: You said you don't use the State Employment Service for workers.
- Camp: No, we haven't needed it. My son may have--well, it's not a thing that we use regularly, I'd better put it that way.
- Baum: Do you know from comments by other growers how effective that service has been in providing good labor?
- Camp: Well, some years ago some of us felt that some of the boys in there were sympathetic with the racketeers and the farmers didn't like that too much and didn't use it. Then there was a time when they had some good men in there who apparently were trying to be fair to everybody, and on that basis it could render a service, to both farmers and laborers. But only if it does that can it be successful.
- Baum: I notice in agricultural towns the first thing you see is the big sign that directs you to the agricultural employment bureau.
- Camp: You know Parkinson's law, when bureaucratic governments get

Camp: something started it multiplies five per cent each year. Well, that's no exception. The employees of that organization see that those signs are put up. I'm not condemning them for it, I'm just saying that's the way it works.

Baum: In the 1960 picketing the State Employment Service did not refer workers to any ranch that was involved--that the union claimed was involved in a labor dispute. The issue also came up of the bracero program--if the State Employment Service could send braceros to a place that was involved in a labor dispute.

Comments on Groups of Agricultural Workers

Baum: What do you think of the whole bracero program? Some feel that it's not necessary any longer.

Camp: Well, we have never used braceros ourselves. During the war we had some German prisoners, and they did quite well. But we were trying to produce food for the government, they were asking us to plant potatoes and other things, so it wasn't a question of getting them in order to make money. But we didn't do that for very long.

I'm sure the bracero program has done a wonderful job on many of the California crops, and in other states too. But our operations and labor situation has been such that we have never had to use braceros. I'm sure the program has been needed, and is still needed. Whether it will always be needed I'm not in a position to say. Citrus growers seem to feel they haven't been able to get enough other workers to do this type of work. Americans don't like to do a lot of stoop work, either. Climbing ladders and picking is quite a well paying job, but it's a job a lot of people don't seem to want to do.

Baum: You've had the so-called Okies and Arkies working for you, and domestic Mexicans, and Negroes. Do you find any differences in these various groups as to how they perform or how satisfactory they are as labor? Have you ever used Filipinos?

Camp: Yes, at one time; and Japanese, Chinese, while I was working with the bank. We've never had any Orientals that picked cotton at all, and they haven't been in the potato fields.

Camp: In the vineyards the Orientals have been very fine. But they also have very fine service out of the Mexican nationals. DiGiorgio used both--I don't know about now. But when Mr. DiGiorgio was still alive they didn't use many, if any Negroes. There weren't nearly as many in California then as now.

But among the people from the Southwest and the West, and the domestic Mexicans and the Negroes, at first there wasn't very much difference insofar as the amount of work that was done by a hundred, you'd say, or any one group of the three. But that has changed, and there is an attitude today that you can't depend, if you have a crew of the Negro people--and I like them very much--but there's a lot of agitators somewhere apparently who are working up a lot of feeling. They're not as dependable now, as a group. Not as individuals, but as a group. So storms are brewing, in my own opinion. And yet we're still using a lot of Negroes. We have a lot of fine Negro leaders who are doing their best to prevent difficulties. Like the Muslim group comes in...

Baum: The Black Muslims come in?

Camp: Yes. It's a very sad situation. But with the white people from the states you mentioned--Oklahoma, Texas and Arkansas--I'm one of them myself, from South Carolina, and I'm just terribly fond of them. All of our foremen are former migrants from one of those states. Some of them are with us now who have children born on our place and they're now going to high school and college.

Baum: Those people whose children go on to college or go on to finish high school, the children are not going to become field laborers. They may become foremen or farmers, but they won't be available any more in the labor market, will they?

Camp: Yep, they will. They'll become better laborers, because they like the work and the pay is as much as the farmers make for themselves, and they know it. As time goes on, we hope, agricultural people will be able to pay more on nearly an equal basis with other industries. But high school graduates will become better laborers for farmers because more mechanization--there won't be so much, as time goes on, manual labor and there will be more skilled mechanical labor, driving the equipment, and what-have-you. You've got to have qualified people who have some education.

Baum: More and more skilled laborers, and fewer and fewer unskilled?

Camp: Well, of course there are fewer and fewer unskilled anyway, all over. Unskilled in the sense that they have no schooling and are not qualified for retraining for something else. There's not much of that, in California. We have very few people in that category.

On our farm every worker is qualified to do any and every job that we have, and they do. They go from one job to another, maybe three in the same day. We in our family have seen this coming for a long time, and since properly skilled ranch labor is a little hard to get, we planned accordingly and already we have eight tractor drivers and two cooks in our grandchildren! [General amusement] Big families on farms used to be mainly to supply the labor. You've got to have them for skilled labor now!

Baum: Are Mexican-American laborers still working on your farm?

Camp: We have fewer and fewer of them because we depended on them largely for our potato harvest, and now that we're going into more mechanized harvesting of potatoes we need fewer of them. They will be released for some other kind of work. But most people are still using hand labor for potatoes. It's only a question of time, though.

Baum: In other words, the Mexican-Americans are not as well prepared to take on mechanized jobs as the white laborers.

Camp: Well, I guess if I had to say yes or no the answer would be no. But there are some awful good Mexican laborers, mechanics and tractor drivers. I'm not saying that they can't qualify themselves. In fact we have some very fine Mexican skilled folks right now, and we are getting more.

When it gets to the Negro people, there are a lot of good ones, an awful lot of good ones. It's reaching a stage where it's rather dangerous to assign a high-priced piece of machinery to someone who's being agitated on the outside to cause trouble, though. So we just have to use our best judgment and play it by ear.

Baum: So you can't be sure whether you can trust them with expensive equipment?

Camp: No. You have to try to be sure no matter what nationality it is on that score, but there is more agitation in the one field (Negro) now, and has been for years, than anywhere else.

Camp: I just saw the headlines of the vote they had yesterday in Berkeley, that type of agitation, whoever's behind it is causing trouble. [Fair housing ordinance] It's unfortunate for us farmers, and me in particular because I love them so much and enjoy working with them above all others, really. We had a number who were excellent tractor drivers. One of our best now is a Negro.

Baum: I've read about the Black Muslims in Los Angeles and Chicago. I didn't know about them in rural areas.

Camp: They're in Bakersfield too. Well, in the town of Bakersfield, and wherever they go they kind of fan out. It happened to be some of us who got wind of the fact that they were coming to Bakersfield. We were wise of some meetings that were going to be held, under the auspices of certain other organizations--to spell it out in plain English, one of them being the American Civil Liberties Union. They have fostered the meetings of all kinds of people, including the Black Muslims. They set up a committee, a police review board. I don't remember what they called themselves, but it actually was the American Civil Liberties Union in that area doing it under another name. We had them all catalogued. This was less than a year ago.

Mrs.

Camp: Human relations, that's what it was called.

Baum: The groups of laborers you have now, their children are preparing themselves to step into more mechanized jobs.

Camp: Yes. They're going right ahead to the regular schools like all other people and we're encouraging them and helping them. We have financed several children of people who've been with us all the time in going to high school and some of them into business school.

Baum: Mechanized farming kind of presumes a more permanent labor force, rather than migratory labor.

Camp: Well, yes.

Baum: I don't think you'd want to turn your heavy equipment over to somebody who just came in.

Camp: Well, believe it or not, that's what we did do during the migration, all that influx, and had they not been good people all of the machinery would have gone to pot overnight. But those migrants were good people. This is what I always enjoy

Camp: emphasizing. Most of them were my kind of folks.

Baum: You'd want to be sure they were skilled, too.

Camp: Well, you take them out and train them as much as you can quickly, and watch.

Mrs.

Camp: But they were mostly people of integrity.

Camp: Integrity, and intelligence too. But had they not been basically awfully good people, all of the farm machinery would have gone to pot. It was those same people, who because they are fine God-loving people, refused to be agitated and sucked in by all the agitators. Most of them were farming back home--many had their own operations so they knew the cost of operation.

Baum: Those people are not normally migratory.

Camp: That's right.

Baum: But there is a large group of people who are normally migratory and who don't want to stay in one place.

Camp: Yes, but they're not from any one state. They're from California and everywhere else. That's right. And we have no right, really, as long as they don't bother anybody criminally or disease-wise, to tell them they should squat and stay. But we have people who are agitating all over the country, insisting that it's somebody's fault that they're not settling down in one place. That just isn't true. It may be with a small percentage, but these people just don't want to stay in one place all the time. And that's their business. As long as they are law abiding and don't become a hazard to other people.

Baum: It sounds as though the new agriculture is going to displace these migratory people, because each farm is going to have permanent employees who are highly skilled in the use of the machines and they won't need many of the migratory workers.

Camp: There will always be need--I say always, but for the foreseeable future, no one can foresee that all hand labor is going to be replaced. That just isn't in the cards. There are a lot of crops--strawberries, for instance. How can you think of completely mechanizing that crop without tearing up the plants? And you want to produce next week, next month. Tomato vines, yes, because you do destroy the tomato vine after you harvest.

Camp: That's going to be mechanized pretty soon; in fact they are already. I'm speaking of canning tomatoes, not table. But there are some that are more difficult.

The pattern may be that those who do operate with mechanical equipment will have their residences on the farms or in the town close by. They could have either. And they can have year-round work, probably. Then for a particular crop they will need some extra help and most of that will probably be supplied by the families, children, and others of the permanent helpers. But they may need more than that for some crops, and that may be supplied by these people who wish to be migrants. There'll never be a law, in my opinion, that--well, you can't legislate regulations to tell a man he's got to live in a certain place.

Baum: What do you think will happen with the cessation of the bracero program? Will it bother any of the other farmers?

Camp: Temporarily, yes, but they'll mechanize more and more, and they'll provide more houses on individual ranches so as to bring in people from other areas and other states. We've had a lot of Mexicans living on our personal farms, also a lot of them live in little villages or communities close to us, who count or depend on our operations for part of their annual work, and many or most of them own their own homes. They're good citizens. They make mighty good help. Actually nearly all the extra help we need comes from this source. That's what it is. They are not all Mexicans. We have most of our permanent help living with us but when we need extra help in a hurry we get permanent citizens to come out and work.

Baum: Mexican-Americans.

Camp: Yes, in large measure.

Baum: Maybe with cessation of the bracero program the hardest blow will be to Mexico.

Camp: That's right. I say one of the best public relations programs we've ever had with another country has been the bracero program; I say it with no sentiment because, as I've already stated, I don't use braceros. And the folks who have helped to kill it have hit below the belt so far as Mexico is concerned. Now, it may be that Phil Bancroft depends on braceros.

Baum: I don't think so.

Camp: People down in the Salinas Valley use them a lot, and the orange growers in Ventura County and Santa Barbara County, but in time I suspect they can also provide adequate help from their residents. I don't mean the so-called labor that is now out of work, because these winos are not going to be any good to anybody, ever, and neither is a brickmason or an electrician who's out of work temporarily, because they're not going to go out and pick up potatoes or harvest lettuce. They're whistling in the dark when they talk about this helping the overall unemployment situation. Maybe a little, yes, but not enough to count.

Baum: What about the teenagers who want to work?

Camp: Well, we'll have to go back and get the sob sisters and do-gooders who have put across certain legislation in Sacramento forbidding farmers to use teenagers and forbidding them to use women except in certain work for a certain number of hours per day. Labor laws put over by the sob sisters, and perhaps the labor unions, which work against the teenagers very much.

Baum: Well, what about the eighteen-year-olds who graduate from high school or drop out, but they're not really trained and most people won't hire these young kids who haven't had any background.

Camp: Well, too many of these are not wanting to go out and work on farms. They know the government or somebody is going to take care of them; that's what they've been promised. The time is fast coming when all labor on the farms is going to have to be much better trained than they have been before.

The best way is to have some training on the farm as they go through high school, if they want to do that kind of work. Mechanical training. Some high schools don't have much mechanical training, and I think that's terrible. Cal Poly does one of the finest jobs in America, and because of that the product of Cal Poly is going to help revolutionize agriculture in California and then in other places.

Baum: Would your trained mechanics be products of Cal Poly or would they have been trained at a lower level? When they get out of Cal Poly they're too highly trained to use as ordinary tractor drivers--.

Camp: Not the two-year trainees. And many of the four-year trainees-- in fact, one of the boys who was at school several years ago is farming adjoining us, and doing much of his own labor. But certainly he knows how to direct the rest of them.

COTTON IN CALIFORNIA--BUSINESS ASPECTS
(April 3, 1963--afternoon session continued)

Cotton Crop Financing

Baum: I wanted to ask you about financing in the cotton business. I had read that most of the cotton crop is financed by gin and cottonseed oil companies.

Camp: That's true to a very large extent in California, Arizona, and New Mexico, and south Texas. The rest of the Cotton Belt, not nearly to the same extent. I have to confess, even though I'm an individualist in growing cotton, it's a miracle to me why a grower has to or permits himself to go back to a cotton gin or oil mill or cotton financing company to be financed for the next year's cotton crop.

Year after year, no matter whether they make good money or not most growers go back to this source to be financed. It's a mystery to me because we don't do it, never have. I don't want to be regulated or have to have somebody's thumb on me. The grower must agree to gin with them, to deliver his seed to them, maybe have them sell his cotton crop. Certainly the grower pays more for his money than he would if he could get it directly from the bank. Cotton finance companies will take greater risks than will banks. Personally I don't like the risky ones either!

Baum: In the case that the farmer does borrow the money, is the lending company co-owner of the crop?

Camp: Yes. If I'm a grower and you're the finance agency, why, you'd require of me--I've got to make up my budget, I've got, say, a hundred acres to grow cotton on and I've got to say how much it will cost me to do all the different things. I've got to show it. And then your credit man (lending agency) has got to approve that. Then it's put on a monthly basis, as it's needed, and you as the finance agent will take a mortgage on the prospective crop and everything else that I have. That's the way to do it.

Baum: Can the financing agent tell the farmer, for instance, what kind of fertilizer to use?

Camp: Well, they don't go that far. However, the finance agency furnishes what you would call a grower service; a gin manager or somebody goes around and visits. Actually, what he's going for mostly is to see if they're doing a good job and the risk is not too great. But at the same time he's supposed to be and usually is pretty well versed in cotton growing and will give all the advice he's got. The grower may get a service. Certainly they did in the early days when the growers knew very little about growing cotton. In the first years I, as an individual in charge of cotton investigation work for the U.S.D.A., supervised every cotton field all over the whole valley and state. The first seven or eight years I supervised every field, not in all the details. Then it got so big that the gins themselves set up this financing system and they have their own men.

Baum: I understand now that the gins are beginning to buy their own cotton land.

Camp: Many gins do have cotton land. A man would own some land, be a farmer, and then build a gin.

Baum: I'm speaking of the big gins which lend money; instead they buy cotton land and hire somebody to run it.

Camp: The Producers Cotton Oil Company in Fresno has done that. Much of that came about--they had lent money to the fellow who was farming this land and got so involved they were induced to take over, for one reason or another. And much of their farming has come about that way. I know one last year had to take over two thousand acres because the farmers went broke, and owing the gins a lot of money, they just stepped in.

Baum: If the gin lends the money and mortgages chattel and land as well as the crop, then the farmer has actually not shifted his risk, has he? He's taking the chance of losing his land and machinery too. Unless the mortgage is only on the crop.

Camp: Usually it's just on the crop and on chattel, not on the land. But when he gets so involved that they go all the way--and a man who is borrowing money on his crops most likely has his land mortgaged to somebody else, a federal land bank or something--then the gin can get hold of that.

Baum: Wouldn't this seem to be a threat to the independence of the

Baum: farming segment of our society, if the gins own great portions of land?

Camp: There might be something to that. There is theoretically at least. I have a feeling that companies would be most unhappy and would soon find it better to dispose of the land and let individuals produce the cotton. But I do know of another big outfit who financed a grower from scratch, and then bought him out at a very high figure and are now farming that land. The original owner went on and developed a lot of other raw land and has been rather successful. But those things, while they look successful, and are, sometimes, if you look behind the scene there are a lot of headaches for somebody.

Cotton Land Ownership

Baum: Is most cotton grown on land that is owned by the farmer, or do they lease the land to an extent?

Camp: I haven't a percentage, but certainly most of the land that grows cotton in the San Joaquin Valley is owned by the growers. And an awful lot of it is paid for. Another big percentage will be owned but it may have a mortgage on it.

Baum: Most of the cotton is grown on farmer-owned land rather than on leased land.

Camp: Oh yes, by far. And it's very good that these absentee landlords are willing to have their land developed and put to good use by farmers who are willing to take it on.

Baum: Are the big landholding companies going to sell the land?

Camp: I understand the Kern County Land Company, for ten or fifteen years hasn't sold any, has withdrawn land. I predict that the time will come when they'll sell again.

Baum: When land is leased, is it usually on a per acre rental or on a share?

Camp: Both. I believe it's mostly share.

Baum: What does the share average? I've read about 20 per cent of the crop.

Camp: Well, it varies with the crop and with the price of the crop. It so happens that Mr. Melcher, when he was vice-president and general manager of the Kern County Land Company, asked me to show methods for farm leasing, and they got me to lease and farm the first land they leased to anybody in cotton in the state. They didn't know what percentage to set, so I did. That was in 1940.

Ranch labor at that time was forty cents an hour, we pay a dollar and a quarter an hour now. Cotton is not the same everywhere. It depends on the land, whether it's fertile, whether water is expensive, but if I were to average it out I'd say there's more of it on a quarter of the crop than any other percentage. Sometimes it's one-third, (where water is furnished by the land owner) sometimes one-fifth, and undoubtedly on some poor land it's less than that.

Baum: I had read an article on the Kern County Land Company which mentioned W. B. Camp as one of their tenants.

Camp: I was the first one. I was a sharecropper, so I'm qualified to talk as a sharecropper! They have a sliding scale on potatoes as well as some other crops. If the price is high they get a bigger percentage than if the price is way down below the cost of production. I developed their original leasing arrangements for all crops. The railroads own land. All the oil companies own land.

Baum: They're holding the land for oil possibilities, but will farm it in the meantime?

Camp: They'll let someone else farm it. Many of the large absentee owners are not only willing but anxious to sell the real estate and retain their interest in the mineral rights. If the arrangement is mutually beneficial, they don't want the land, as such. The Kern County Land Company as yet hasn't taken that attitude. They used to, but now with the group they've got in, they have decided to withhold the sales for a while. I predict that won't be forever. Pressure is growing from many sides.

Baum: Maybe they're holding on because they don't know which way they're going to jump.

Camp: I think so.

Baum: When there's a cotton history on the land, that goes with the land, not the farmer, doesn't it?

Camp: Yes. That's the way it's set up. That's not true with some of the other crops. Rice history in some states goes with the land and in some states it doesn't.

In potatoes, the Washington office has set it up on the basis of allowing each state to adopt any method it wants, to go with the land or go with the man. In California the potato history went with the man. This was several years ago when there was a government potato program. I think eventually it will be shown, because potatoes are different from cotton, many diseases get into potatoes and you have to get off the land, so it's beneficial to both landlord and grower in potatoes (to have it go with the man). It's of value to the man too as an individual to have the history go with him--provided he created the history.

Tobacco goes with the land, a hundred-acre farm with ten acres of tobacco history may sell for one thousand dollars an acre, while another hundred acres adjoining it with no tobacco history, same land, may sell for ten dollars an acre. Well, not that low, but twenty-five or fifty dollars or so. And some of us don't believe in that, but that's the way they still operate the tobacco program.

Cotton is a little different from tobacco, and that's another story. Whether cotton could be assigned to the man hasn't yet been satisfactorily developed. Not many objections that I can see to it going with the man, though as an operator I'd have nothing to lose if I wanted to lease some land somewhere and let mine have a rest from cotton. I'd have nothing to lose. But there are a lot of arguments.

New Technology

(April 4, 1963--morning session)

Baum: I was going to ask you about the effect of the invention of the cotton picker.

Camp: Yes. They tried over many years different methods of getting a machine that would pick cotton, and finally--many people again who weren't looking far enough ahead were saying, well,

Camp: maybe they shouldn't get a cotton picking machine. It would displace too many people who would be put out of work and it'd be terrible.

As a matter of fact there were two brothers back in the South somewhere who said that, well, they had mechanics who could put together a machine but they were going to put it off for many years because they thought it would displace too many people. Well, that was a good alibi, I guess. There were people who honestly felt that way, though.

Now that we have the cotton picking machine and it has in the western area of the Cotton Belt taken over almost all the harvest and is doing it very fast, it isn't working that way. As a matter of fact, today if we didn't have the cotton picking machine, I doubt if we'd get our cotton harvested. The people who used to pick the cotton all the time, many of them have migrated out of the cotton belt and into industry elsewhere. And those in the Southeast today, or even in the West, who try to pick it by hand find it very difficult. [Noise of airplane drowned out speech]

Baum: Well, picking by machine requires that you have a large enough ranch that it will be economical.

Camp: Yes. You've got to have acreage sufficient to justify the purchase of a machine. Those machines are not cheap. But that's progress. Because of that machine, growers can produce cotton cheaper than they could without it, and I doubt very much if cotton could continue as a profitable crop in America today if it wasn't for the cotton picking machine and other machinery.

Synthetic fibers are very competitive with cotton, and even now we're looking for ways to lower the production cost several cents more in order to be competitive. So when agitators insist that growers meet their demands, usually impossible for a farmer to meet, it means two things if he were to try to: first, he'd go broke. But if he could meet them, the consumers would have to pay much much more for the finished product.

Baum: And they just wouldn't use cotton then.

Camp: Wouldn't use it at all. Growers now are very very nervous, the cotton industry all over the world is very nervous. Many cotton mills are converting part of their machinery to man-made

Camp: fibers, if they perfect it to that point, but cotton is still, it's a fact, best suited for many many uses, better suited than synthetics. But there are uses that synthetics are better for.

Baum: These two brothers, were they the Rust brothers?

Camp: Yes. I see you've done your research.

Baum: Did you ever meet them?

Camp: Oh yes. A few years ago they split up, and I'm not sure whether both are active but they went ahead independently and got others to help finance them, and one of them came out ten or twelve years ago and wanted us to finance him to get him started manufacturing his machine. But we're not in that kind of business, we're just farmers.

Baum: One of the brothers asked W. B. Camp, Incorporated, to help?

Camp: For the further perfection of it and the manufacture of it.

Baum: Wouldn't a farm implements company be eager to--?

Camp: If they had something better than somebody else, yes, and that's what we told him. And one of the companies did take it and now manufactures a Rust cotton picker. And it's all right. The John Deere people have an awful good one, and so does International Harvester.

Baum: I thought the Rust brothers were the ones who invented the theory on which all cotton pickers were built?

Camp: Oh, I wouldn't say that. They've done a lot, yes, but there've been a lot of people working on cotton machines for a long time. In the early days of cotton in California people would come along with an idea and would want to demonstrate it, and since cotton was new in the West I was called on to help judge the performance. For many years I would put on my cotton picking sack and demonstrate to my own satisfaction that they weren't yet prepared, because I could pick more cotton myself with my own hands than they could--considering not the machine as a whole but the price you had to put into it, it just wasn't ready. But when this present spindle method came along, why, it has done a good job. There is still room for lots of improvements.

Baum: Does this require breeding a different kind of cotton plant?

- Camp: You hear that and read about it and we do hope that the breeders will get a cotton plant that will still produce as much cotton of the same good quality and be better suited for the picking machine. We read a lot that the breeders have done that and some of the experiment stations say so, all right, let's recognize that maybe they have. But the cotton picking machine can still go into any cotton that's raised today and do a fairly good job, if it's planted and cultivated properly.
- Baum: Do you think it's possible to increase the production per acre substantially again?
- Camp: Yes, I do. I think we will. But it won't all be done with strictly a breeding program. It will be that combined with all the improved methods of farming, fertilizer and so on. And that applies to all crops. In other words--if we employ all the presently known "know-how."
- Baum: You said you thought that the crops could perhaps be doubled with advanced methods.
- Camp: Throughout the United States, yes--.
- Baum: Not throughout California? California's already advanced over the rest of the United States.
- Camp: That's right. The increase in California will naturally be a little less percentage-wise than it will through some parts of the United States where they still do a rather mediocre job of farming, and that applies to my own native state of South Carolina. We're farming back there too, and we make that statement in speeches every time we're in that part of the world. The experiment stations all recognize that it is true, and they're just now beginning to use more and more supplemental irrigation in the rainfall belt to avoid the droughts that they have almost every year. The combination of all those things will easily double production--and I'm talking not just about cotton, but all crops in America. And even then we've just scratched the surface. What we're going to see in the way of production on the same acreage that we have now fifty years from now, even twenty-five years from now, is going to be miraculous.

Irrigation and the State Water Plan

Baum: You use irrigation in the San Joaquin Valley, and I understand that the wells are having to go deeper and deeper, which is increasing the cost of irrigation.

Camp: Yes, very much. I would say there have been probably too many wells drilled there during the past fifty years. They're taking out more water than is normally coming into the basin. There is water in other areas of California if it were just distributed, and that's what the irrigation districts are trying to do now--bring water from the northern part of the state. They're even talking now of going to the Columbia River and bringing it down and distributing it over the state.

Governor Brown when he was attorney general, just a year before he announced he was going to run for governor, made a speech to the Rotary Club in Bakersfield. He said to the group, "I'm going to talk about a subject that's rather controversial in some areas, but I want you to know to start with that I'm going to differ with Bill Camp."

I didn't know what he was going to say, and he immediately said, "I'm going to talk about irrigation water. We've got plenty of it in California. It's in the wrong place, much of it, and we need more of it brought from the north to the south and through the San Joaquin Valley. And we've got plenty of money," he said, "to do that out here. But," says Brown, "I wish to have the federal government come in and do it while we can get them to do it, and Camp wants the state of California and the users of the water in California to pay for it."

Well, I was very much relieved when he made that last statement because that is my philosophy, still is. I had never met this man Brown, so you can imagine my surprise at the personal reference. However, I later learned he heard that speech I'd made to the Commonwealth Club back a few years earlier, where I advocated this philosophy very strongly. Why should taxpayers in Mississippi or New York or Maine or somewhere else pay for water that goes into our usage out here? It can be argued that they benefit too, but--.

Baum: I believe that was the issue too in 1933. The State Water Plan had been suggested around 1920.

Camp: The State Water Plan was first thought of and talked about

Camp: by farmers in Kern County, just at the time when I came to California, so I was personally familiar with it. The people I was working with in cotton were the ones who were the leaders in water matters.

Baum: Kern County was worried about water already?

Camp: Well, Kern County is a big county and some people were good engineers and they knew how much water was coming in. It's a matter of calculation as to what and when things will happen.

In the 1920's an engineer by the name of Marshall came along and did a lot of engineering that made sense to the local people. They called it the Marshall Plan for some years, this water plan. But when the depression came along in the late 1920's--and early '30's, they were trying to make work for a lot of people, anything to buy bread, the federal government said, "Well, we can help out with this. This water project will furnish a lot of employment for a lot of people. Workers need it and you'll ultimately need the water so it will be mutually beneficial."

Well, that's true, but when the federal government got hold of it the plan was--the expectation was that they would release it as soon as the labor emergency was over. But oh, no. The planners in the Bureau of Reclamation in Washington had other ideas. Still have the same ideas. I think that the book that Senator Downey wrote on irrigation, They Would Rule the Valley, is so true. They were making politics out of our human suffering, but those kind of political and social reformers, they don't give up.

Baum: I guess it was in 1933 that California voted to accept the Central Valley Project under the Bureau of Reclamation, and I wondered if there had been much discussion of this in farmer groups, prior to the election.

Camp: Oh, lots.

Baum: Before that it had been the State Water Plan, and it had been defeated three times in elections, having the state build it.

Camp: But you must remember finances were not then what they are now, and people thought they were paying lots of taxes. I'm not an engineer and I'm not in that official fight, I can only speak as a farmer.

Baum: Do you remember what the farmers discussed or how they felt

Baum: as a majority?

Camp: I'm not sure I'm qualified to say, because I was busy with my farming. I only know that the discussion was initiated in Kern County by some mighty competent citizens. Also I know that I laid it on the line in plain English in my talk to the San Francisco Commonwealth Club in early 1952. This is the talk Governor Brown didn't like, titled "You Can't Eat Red Tape."^{*}

I don't want to pose as an irrigation expert, then or now; I was not in the political fight.

Baum: In 1944 the farmers wanted to get out from under the federal reclamation 160-acre law.

Camp: Still do.

Baum: They tried to get an amendment to the law under which the Central Valley Project had been built exempting the San Joaquin farmers from the 160-acre limitation. They called it the Elliot amendment and it failed in Congress.

Camp: It's just one of those things. The Bureau of Reclamation has a lot of money to promote their ideas, and they're still doing it. The 160-acre limitation thing is one of the meanest things that could ever be imposed on farmers today.

Take for instance the San Joaquin Valley. Up to about the time that Senator Downey's book was written, maybe even after that, up to maybe ten or twelve years ago, probably 90 per cent or more of the money that had been spent on land and irrigation was private money. Maybe it was a greater percentage than that. And all the ranches in the San Joaquin Valley were built with private money; irrigation systems built with private money, wells drilled and everything.

Here comes along the depression and the federal government stepped in, and they didn't turn loose. But now that they've completed the Central Valley Canal they made everybody sign an agreement that they would sell all their land except 160 acres before they could get one drop of water out of that canal.

*

"You Can't Eat Red Tape," talk by W. B. Camp, Farmer, Bakersfield, California, before the Commonwealth Club of California, April 4, 1952. San Francisco, California, pp. 11, 12, 13. Brochure in Bancroft Library.

Camp: Mind you, the farms had been developed with private money. "You've got to sell all of it except 160 acres, if you get one drop of this water."

I can't think of words sufficiently strong to express my own feelings as to how damnable that kind of philosophy is. It does no good for anybody. If the public at large were going to profit by it I could sit back and feel sorry for an individual owner but yet go along with it. But it isn't so. Nobody is going to profit by that kind of philosophy. 160 in many crops, including cotton, is not an efficient unit today.

When the 160 acre law was first on the books--back in the early nineteen hundreds, it was O.K. It had to do with government land and government money for reclaiming it. In other words in the days of homesteading and free land--to limit such to 160 acres per man was all right there. Those were horse and buggy days.

Today we live in a totally different world--economically speaking. This 160 acre limitation actually indicates that it is all right for all other businesses in America to operate and produce goods and services in the best and most economical manner--except--except the farmer.

In the end the people who are going to suffer most from such nonsense will be the consumers (all the people), because products produced on small, inefficient farms will cost much more!

Ginning Companies

James S. Townsend, the First Gin Expert

Baum: When were the first ginning companies set up in California?

Camp: The first gin was built in Kern County, I believe, in 1918.

Baum: Was it a private one or a group of farmers?

Camp: Co-op. There was one built at Arvin.

But in connection with that, to show them how to build one and help them build it, I went back to South Carolina and hired a man named James S. Townsend. He was the best long staple roller gin expert in the United States at that time. Sea Island cotton was grown along the coast of South Carolina and Georgia, and he was rated the best man down there. And since they had just been ruined by the boll weevil and no longer had Sea Island cotton, he was available to come out here.

We were hoping then to grow Egyptian cotton, which has to be ginned on a roller-type gin, contrasted with a saw gin, which gins the upland cotton, Acala cotton, for instance. He was expert in both of them, had worked in both fields. He became the first gin expert--he didn't like to be called an expert, but that's what they kept calling him--the first gin specialist who was hired by the federal government anywhere in the United States.

I brought him out here and he helped build these first gins. He built the one at Kearney Vineyards, lived with Parker Frisselle while he built it. The government paid his salary; it was for the Pima cotton for the war emergency, so the government felt it was sufficiently important that they had me bring this man to help with the ginning because it wouldn't be good unless it was ginned properly.

Following that, he stayed out here; I kept him busy checking on gins as the cotton industry grew. He was available for anywhere in the United States but out here, since we didn't have trained people in the mechanics of it, he was the supervisor. He stayed with me the whole time I was at the Shafter Station and then stayed on for a total of eighteen or twenty years in the West.

Now they have gin specialists stationed all over the United States. There's a gin put up at Las Cruces, New Mexico, and another one at Clemson College, South Carolina, one in Texas--all for the purpose of experimenting with different methods of ginning and demonstrating to other ginners who come in as to what the best new machinery is.

We in California went east and got this man and established the pattern of the importance of having gin specialists to help train ginners all over.

Baum: About how much does it cost to build a gin?

Camp: Well, the average gin plant today--we used to think of it way back then as \$50,000 or maybe less. Today the same unit is \$250,000 or more, and most of the gin plants going today will run from 250 to 350 thousand dollars for a single unit setup. If you build two of them as two units and operate them as one, why, you just double it almost.

Baum: Even back in 1918 it was roughly \$50,000? That seems like a very large expenditure for the farmers to put up.

Camp: It was. But one picking machine today costs nearly \$25,000. Just one. This has nothing much to do with what we're talking about maybe, but the investment in farming per worker today is, oh, the last figure I saw was nearly 50 per cent more than it is per worker in industry, averaged, all over. Farming is big business, and that's one of the many reasons why for many years I've been insisting that we should not say farmers and businessmen, but farmers and other businessmen. Today if a farmer isn't a businessman he's not going to farm long.

First Gins in California

Baum: Then you had gins around as early as 1918?

Camp: We had to have. The cotton that I grew that first year in the San Joaquin Valley I packed into large bags that were used then for wool; I think I could get several hundred pounds in each bag, and I shipped it down to one of the government experiment stations. I think in Bard, California, maybe--near Yuma, Arizona. [Chuckling]

Baum: I read in a 1926 newspaper clipping that one of the earliest gins was Anderson-Clayton Company.

Camp: They came into the picture along about that time, but there were some gins before. We had to have gins to gin the cotton, beginning, as I say, in 1918.

Baum: The first ones were not private but co-op?

Camp: There was one co-op. A bunch of Arvin people put in the money to build it. Then we built one at about the same time at Kearney Park. This was a University experiment station project, but the government--we, the U.S.D.A., even bought most of the machinery, because the whole project was experimental, and this became a joint deal--very wonderful co-operation.

Baum: Was this open to farmers to bring in their cotton?

Camp: If there were some growers close around they could, and they did a little, but it was a small unit. It wasn't a real commercial gin, but it took care of all the Kearney Park production, and that's where we were doing some breeding work too. We did gin some neighbors' cotton but it wasn't constructed to be a commercial gin.

Baum: So there was a need to establish other gins.

Camp: Oh yes. None of the others were co-ops, as I recall now, except the one at Arvin, and after a couple of years they didn't grow any more Egyptian cotton and it was built over and converted into a commercial gin for Acala cotton.

Baum: Somebody bought it?

Camp: Yes, bought the farmers' shares.

Baum: In the same clipping I noticed that one of the earliest cotton farmers was S. A. Camp. Is that a relative of yours?

Camp: Yes. My brother. I brought him out from South Carolina in 1923. He died in 1957. His estate, his widow, daughter, and his son are carrying on now.

Baum: Did any of the rest of your family come out here?

Camp: Yes. My oldest brother came out subsequent to the coming of S. A., and stayed four years, but his family wanted to go back to South Carolina very badly and they did. Most of them are back in South Carolina now.

Baum: There was an article in Life about cotton farming and there was a Camp in there. I think it was probably your brother's son.

Camp: Well, that whole Life article was unfortunate. A few years prior to this article, Time magazine had two or three people

Camp: up visiting with us and they wanted some sensational stories about potatoes being piled up, with the help of government money, and so on. These reporters spent two days in the county. They visited me several times and telephoned me also. They didn't get the quotes that they wanted while they were there so they kept calling me back from Los Angeles, several times during the next two weeks. They still didn't get any quotes that would make headlines, so they didn't write an article, fortunately.

And two years later when these people came representing Life, a man and a woman, they called and asked to see me. I was home so when they came over I asked them pointedly, "Now just what is it you want?" I told them my experience with the reporters from the other magazine, Time, which is owned by the same group. I told them we refused to give Time anything... because it was evident they just wanted something sensational.

The Life reporters said, "We're going to write a story on agriculture in the Valley, taking pictures of the products. We don't want any personalities."

"Fine, that's the way it ought to be, and I'll sit and visit with you and go to the field with you so you can get the pictures and facts you need; also I'll do anything I can to help you get factual material concerning San Joaquin Valley agriculture, but only on this basis."

So we went in, sat down on the porch, pretty soon one of them says, "Can I take some pictures of your roses and camellias out in your yard?"

I said, "Yes." The other one stayed and talked. That was the end of that. And they promised me with all the oaths that they could take there would definitely be no article written about any people.

Well, when the article came out there sat the fellow on the porch talking, the picture was shot through the screen porch, and it showed me sitting there. The headline of the article was so ridiculous, it was terrible. And so were the other stories they had in there.

They went on and found other people who were happy to be talked about, I guess, but that whole article did agriculture no good and much dirt.

Baum: It didn't look like such a bad article. It was a very short one, without much information.

Camp: It was terrible, the headlines of it.

Baum: I did remember a picture of another Camp.

Camp: In a boat. It showed playboys, that's what it was trying to show. Well, lots of people have a rowboat or a speedboat or a yacht, but the whole thing was written on a slanted, shirt-sleeves millionaires basis.

Baum: You didn't think that helped your image?

Camp: It didn't help agriculture a bit. Very detrimental. And many of the individuals I happen to know were not in the class that the headlines indicated at all, but the picture given out to the world was that all these people have nothing to do but play. I want no part of that kind of sensationalism, Mrs. Baum.

Mrs.

Camp: It was in Life magazine in 1951. It said, "They now have time to enjoy their money."

Camp: Not that we don't play, we go camping and all, but all of us have to work.

Baum: The gins that were listed in 1940 in the Shafter area were D. O. Moore, Shafter-Vasco Gin, and Camp-West-Lowe Gin.

Camp: Yes. That was S. A. Camp. All three of those fellows are now deceased. We own some of the properties some of those folks had.

Baum: That makes just three gins.

Camp: As the industry grew there were lots of them.

Baum: In 1948 then there is the S. A. Camp Gin, separated.

Camp: Well, they separated after a number of years together and became three different organizations.

Baum: Do many of the farmers have their own gins?

Camp: I wouldn't say a lot of them do, no. We have our own.

Baum: Your gin is just for your own cotton, or do you gin cotton for others?

Camp: We built it for the purpose of ginning just our own cotton,

Camp: but if we have time and neighbors insist, and some of them beg pretty hard sometimes, we'll gin it. We're happy to accommodate them if we have time, but it's primarily for our own operations.

Baum: Did some of the farmers build them for a commercial venture, or are they mainly for themselves?

Camp: Yes, some of them have done that. Not a great many of them. The oil mills, Anderson-Clayton Oil Mill, in Arizona, it's called something else, but anyway they have a string of gins located many different places, and they finance the growers who gin there. Producers Cotton Oil Company does the same thing, they have headquarters in Fresno but they operate also in Arizona and down in New Mexico.

Baum: Will Clayton has given a long tape-recorded interview on the rise of the Anderson-Clayton Company to the Columbia University Oral History Project.

Camp: He gave a big banquet in Houston for me in 1936. He and LaMarr Fleming, who succeeded him as president and chairman of the board, gave a big banquet for me and had all the key men from across the country in. They wanted me to tell them how we went about getting a one-variety cotton law in California.

Mr. Clayton is a great man; he's done a great job.

Cottonseed Oil Mills

Baum: A gin is usually connected with an oil mill.

Camp: More often than not. I wouldn't say usually, but more often than not.

Baum: But these are usually already established companies and not farmers who have gone into this sideline.

Camp: Well, in order to operate an oil mill you have to have considerable volume. Depends on the size of the oil mill, volume of seed. You must guarantee yourself the volume of seed that will justify putting up an oil mill, and you have to have a

Camp: tie-in with enough gins to make sure you get enough seed. So they build the gin in different places, wherever they think they can have a group of customers, and they bring the seed to the oil mill. It's not a bad idea. Theoretically it's quite good, provided all of them play fair with the growers, and over the years they have. Competition keeps them pretty much in line.

Baum: Was Stanley Pratt a San Joaquin man, or did he come in?
[San Joaquin Cotton Oil Company]

Camp: He came in. He'd been operating some in Imperial Valley with some of them but he ventured out on his own, got some finance people to help him. I wouldn't say he was just a promoter at all, but he ventured out and wanted to get into business, and he did.

Baum: I'm wondering if the oil mill and cotton gin is usually an outside company that comes in, or do farmers, people who were originally farmers, expand into this other operation?

Camp: Both. There's no set pattern. We (W. B. Camp and Sons, Inc.) have a corporation now, the Kern County Cottonseed Oil Company. During the war the government wanted us to build one (an oil mill), but they had restrictions on getting machinery and it took so long that we just decided not to do it.

In connection with this project, the president, Mr. John Pigott and Mr. C. A. Melcher, vice-president and general manager of the Kern County Land Company, called me from San Francisco and asked if they could come down and visit with us. We had lunch together and during that conversation they said, "We would like to join you in that oil mill." They were looking at it for cattlefeed, maybe tying into a source of supply of meal and hulls.

"We would like to take a percentage, whatever you'd like." It costs quite a lot of money. "We would take 25 per cent of the stock if you'd like us to, but only on one condition," and this one shocked me quite a bit, the condition being "that you and your sons agree to manage and operate the oil mill."

This could have been a very satisfactory arrangement, but the machinery was too difficult to get. I made many trips to Washington and they (the government agencies) had a lot of upstarts in there making final decisions, so I just gave it up. So we haven't built it yet.

Baum: You're still thinking about it.

Camp: Maybe some day.

Baum: Would this be for your own convenience or for a commercial venture?

Camp: It would have to be a commercial venture. We may or may not. At the present time we're not thinking about it. Our operations are kind of like Topsy, one thing follows another. You don't stand still, you either go back or you go forward. And we don't intend to go back. Whether we'll ever get into that particular activity I don't know.

It would help to furnish a diversified structure. Just like we grow many crops because we feel that the market will have less likelihood of being completely disastrous. It won't happen, we hope, to all of the crops in the same year.

Baum: It's kind of insurance.

Camp: Yes. A lot of people concentrate and can be better qualified on one commodity, and that's all right, but we fortunately have several sons, three of them, and we feel that we need several commodities to best utilize all our talents profitably.

Baum: Is most of the cotton in Kern County sold to the gin? You said the gin usually finances the crop and already owns it.

Camp: That's right. Those growers who finance through the gins, which certainly is more than fifty per cent of them at the present time. It used to be most of them. That varies from one area to another too.

Baum: That doesn't leave much room for the co-op gins, does it?

Camp: Well, the co-op gin, it is almost automatic that the cotton ginned goes into the co-op for marketing purposes.

Baum: Does the co-op gin finance farmers? Their crop, a year ahead?

Camp: Yes, many of them do now. They do not have to and don't to the same extent that these other gins do. These other gins do it in order to get the seed, that's the primary purpose. The membership of a co-op gin more often than not have gotten

Camp: themselves in fairly good shape and do not have as much difficulty getting financing. Although as I said there are lots of very successful growers who go back to the gin for financing every year.

The co-op gins have been springing up more and more for the last ten years. There are a lot of them down there. Twenty years ago there were maybe one or two co-op gins; today there are a lot of them, and they've got the independent oil mill worried. But again it furnishes competition and as a grower I'm saying it's a healthy situation.

Baum: Those farmers that take their cotton to the co-op gin, they are the farmers who don't have to be financed by a gin company?

Camp: Perhaps not as much as the others. I wouldn't say they don't have to be financed. But the seed is what the oil mills want, and in the past few years an oil mill has been built by a group of co-ops and it's getting the seed from most of the co-op gins. It takes away the seed from the commercial gins, so it's got some of the smaller mills worried.

Baum: Is there sufficient cotton and seed to go around to all the gins and mills to keep them all in full operation?

Camp: Well, yes. Some of the larger ones may have to curtail part of their facilities, but they've all been getting along quite well. They've been doing awfully well for the last ten or fifteen years.

Baum: I guess that's a factor you consider if you're going to put up your own mill.

Camp: Yes. There were times back in the beginning when the oil mill man was in a bind, there was so much competition. Some of the oil mills pushed the price of seed up so high that a small independent oil mill man couldn't pay it.

I've sat in many meetings where the oil mill man has come in and laid his cards on the table. He says, "If I pay the price which is now being offered by our larger competitors, which is not real but fictitious--just to put me out of business, I may have to quit." I've seen growers under those conditions say, "O.K., you go ahead and pay us, in order to determine the price we'll have to have access to your books, and we'll deliver the seed."

Baum: They take a lower price to maintain that oil mill in operation?

Camp: I've seen it happen two or three different times in the Valley. It's like these gasoline wars. It's a war in the cottonseed price. A bunch of successful and progressive farmers can easily see that competition is good for them, continued competition, not just competition today. We don't want to put somebody out of business and then tomorrow there'll just be one giant, to set the price.

Textile Mills, United States and Abroad

Baum: What happens to the cotton after that? What are your chief markets for California?

Camp: The whole wide world. And I say that advisedly. I doubt if there's another state that can boast of as wide a market as California can for cotton, because we do have good cotton, good spinning quality. A lot of ours goes to Japan, a lot of it goes to Germany, some to France, Great Britain takes some. Some goes to Belgium.

Baum: I read that in 1939 your chief market was the California Cotton Mill in Oakland.

Camp: Well, somebody just wrote a story.

I don't even know if that mill is running now. But it never was big enough to take more than a few bales. It never was a market for San Joaquin Valley or California cotton. I think that much of what they took was low-grade cotton. So whoever wrote the article didn't know what they were writing about.

Now there are lots of cotton mills. The subject comes up every year in different parts of California: why don't they have cotton mills out here? Well, I'm not the last word on that and no one else is, but the cotton mills themselves have wanted to come to California and put up plants as far back as thirty years ago, and they make surveys every once in awhile to see if conditions have changed. They don't publicize those surveys, but there are a lot of things they have to consider other than just the fellow who's going to buy the cloth. First of all, in California they run into the labor situation, and California has been notorious for its strikes. Harry Bridges and them have set up a pattern out here.

Baum: The industries are mostly unionized.

Camp: It isn't a matter of being opposed to unions, but it's being afraid to go into an area where the union is dominated by a Communist like Harry Bridges. There's a lot of difference in unions.

Baum: Well, I think a lot of mills have left New England and gone to the southern states because the New England mills were heavily unionized.

Camp: Not just because they were unionized. They kept demanding and demanding and demanding and the industry couldn't pay it, and they just folded up and went south. They have two things down there. One, the cotton is down there and they don't have to pay freight, so paying the same for labor they could still produce it cheaper. And also the climate was such that they could run twelve months in the year night and day without all the heating expense that they have in New England.

So most of the textile mills are down there and probably will continue to be down there unless a different type of atmosphere in California can develop. But they're afraid of it now. They can't bring one mill out. There have to be lots of related mills and manufacturing plants. It takes high-priced labor, skilled mechanics. Several mills quite often depend on a source of these specialists. And there are several processes.

Baum: Is the San Joaquin Valley satisfactory climatically?

Camp: Well, forty years ago, no. Today, you make your own climate inside the walls of the building. There's no problem there any more. Except that it costs money. In my judgment there will be a number of years yet before any real progress will be made, if at all. I wish the mills would come out.

Japanese Textile Mills and E. D. White

Baum: A lot of cotton goes to Japan, and they have a lot of textile mills there so the competition with the Japanese mills might be a factor.

Mrs.

Camp: And labor is cheaper.

Camp: Yes, and also our American government went over there after the war and furnished the machinery to put up the best cotton mills in the world. Most of our cotton mills haven't yet come up to that standard. Private mills have to make enough money to buy this machinery, and it's been a struggle.

Baum: I read that California favored this; in 1948 they set up a fund to buy a lot of raw cotton surplus and ship it to Japan. "In 1948 a committee was set up at the request of General MacArthur, headed by the president of the American Cotton Manufacturers Association, which recommended that Congress set up a fund to buy raw cotton for Japanese textile mills." In charge of this was E. D. White, who is characterized as a "friend of California cotton." He was appointed cotton specialist for ECA.

Camp: Well, that's interesting. First things first, though. General MacArthur naturally wanted to do his job well, rebuilding the economy of Japan, so I have no fault to find with what he was trying to do at that time. I doubt if he intended it to be a continuing thing that would put our people out of business.

You remember I told you about the telegram sent out by Paul Appleby, executive assistant to Secretary of Agriculture, Henry Wallace, concerning the tenant farmers. [This telegram went out on a Saturday night.] On the following Monday morning the telephones were ringing, telegrams were coming in and we were in a heck of a hotbed. Cully Cobb was in Texas and I was in charge of the AAA Cotton Program in his absence. So the first thing I did after talking to a lot of people in the states on the telephone was to take a man with me and go up to see Dr. H. R. Tolley, who had been director of the Giannini Foundation in Berkeley before Roosevelt was elected, and was back in Washington as the number two man in the AAA.

The man I took with me was the same, E. D. White, mentioned above. He happened to be in Washington at the moment; he had been for two or three years in charge of the cotton program in Arkansas. The Extension service out there recommended him after seeing him and liking his work. We kept him coming in to Washington quite often on committee work, but we decided we wanted him to come in permanently. And he did, shortly after this.

But E. D. White is the only living outside witness to the story of how we beat that subversive order who does

Camp: know precisely what happened that day. He and I are good friends, last year he retired.

Baum: What was his job until he retired?

Camp: The same. He stayed in government, in Washington. Mostly in cotton. He was very conservative always, and very practical, though after transferring to Washington he almost became enamored with some of the philosophies they had there. But I imagine he overcame that, because he was too practical a man to follow that kind of thinking.

Baum: Is it a correct characterization to call him a "friend of California cotton?"

Camp: The only thing I know he knows about California cotton, he came out to visit us one time after I'd come back to California--I think this was probably in '42.

But speaking of his being a friend of California cotton, I don't know of any connection with California cotton except that, you might say. [Laughing] Actually, though, his position was such that he would wish to be fair to all cotton growers in the United States.

Baum: I thought the implication of the article was that Californians were very happy he had been appointed cotton specialist, with the idea that he would promote the sale of California cotton to Japan.

Camp: I was happy because he was a practical and very fine man.

Cotton Price Supports

Baum: In 1934 there was a government loan of twelve cents a pound available on cotton, and the Commodity Credit Corporation as a result took in vast quantities of cotton.

Camp: That's right, because the market was much less than that. In 1929 the market got down to six and something cents a pound.

Baum: The Commodity Credit Corporation had gotten such a large

Baum: quantity of cotton that Secretary Wallace wanted to reduce the amount of the loan the following year, and the cotton senators put pressure on President Roosevelt to put the price up again, so I believe the following year it was a ten-cent loan plus a two-cent bounty. Do you recall this?

Camp: Oh yes, I recall those arguments.

Mrs.

Camp: Here's an article where "W. B. Camp secures a million dollars for cotton growers of the state." This was the acreage-rental basis that "was boosted as a result of the agronomists' efforts." (It also had to do with the ten-cent plowup program.)

"Under the old plan it was not proper for California cotton growers to withdraw land from production under the incentive offered by the government. Mr. Camp pointed this out to officials and was successful in having the rates raised for this state. The California Cotton Cooperative was definitely recognized by the government.

At Washington Mr. Selden was held in esteem, it was reported, and credited with being one of the outstanding managers of co-operatives in America. The government cotton program will be handled here through the University Extension Service, of which Mr. M. A. Lindsay, farm advisor, is executive head of this county, assisted by N. D. Hudson and H. T. Strong."

Camp: Hudson is the assistant director of the whole state now.

Mrs.

Camp: "Moser, vice-president of the American Cooperative of New Orleans, is scheduled to speak in Bakersfield... Mr. Moser worked in Washington to get the plowup option on cotton transferred to the ten-cent loan plan, and this is now an accomplished fact. He will speak on the government cotton developments and plans.

In the meantime, Kern County's cotton crop is estimated to be 80 per cent harvested or ginned. This means a total at this time of approximately fifty thousand bales out of the estimated county production of sixty thousand bales. Approximately twenty gins are running full blast in the county, most of them on twenty-four hour schedules." (This was in December, 1933.)

Baum: That's when you went back to Washington, wasn't it?

Camp: Yes.

Camp: The statement in there about Moser getting certain things done, Moser didn't. But he says he did. It's all right.

Baum: What do you remember about this battling back and forth between Wallace and the cotton senators, I suppose, on what the loan would be each year?

Camp: Well, Wallace was never sympathetic to cotton, and it was evident from the very beginning. And I think right here is as good a place as any to make this statement: in the beginning when Wallace and Davis and Tolley and a bunch of others were working on figures to establish parity for the different commodities, and Jack Hudson and some of them could take the same figure and make any story they wanted to make out of it. A lot of them are very good at that, then and now.

Cully Cobb and some of us told them that the relative prices they were establishing at that time for wheat and corn as against cotton they had misinterpreted, misused their own figures and they were establishing--I don't know how to say it, but the parity for those two commodities was way out of line with the parity that they'd established for cotton. We weren't arguing at all that the parity for whichever one was too high or too low, but if the parity was to stay for wheat and corn as it was established, then cotton should be higher than it was. But we argued frankly the other way, that the parity for cotton was all right but that for wheat and corn was too high.

And as of the last ten years I think the records will show that wheat and corn, wheat in particular, are the two commodities that have been stored more and more and more, and cotton has pretty much carried itself. As a matter of fact, the government made money on cotton for many years.

But our arguments have been completely borne out, that the parity for wheat and corn was way out of line--in other words, the growers could go all out at the loan price on wheat and make big money. We argued that they could bring it way down and still make good money. The facts have borne it out. They weren't sympathetic at all, including Wallace, to cotton, and we had a battle all the time we were there, the Southeast against the other commodities.

Baum: In 1941 there were cotton acreage limitations, and Secretary

Baum: of Agriculture Wickard and surplus marketing administrator Milo Perkins initiated in addition a stamp plan to try to encourage further reduction of acreage, by offering a stamp worth twenty-five dollars in cotton goods per acre unplanted. Did this make any difference in Kern County?

Camp: I don't believe it was ever really put into effect, but they did recommend it. I know of no one who took advantage of that.

Baum: It might be applicable to a five-acre share farm in the South.

Camp: Well, some of us were never sympathetic to the stamp plan in any manner. Maybe they've revised it to the point where it's practical. I would have to analyze it thoroughly before I approved of it now, though. I think that agriculture should be put on its own feet, stand on its own feet, and the things that are social should be taken completely out of the realm of agriculture and forget about agriculture when you talk about social problems.

Anybody operating on an uneconomical unit has got to be subsidized whereas his neighbor who is farming efficiently doesn't have to be subsidized; this becomes a social problem, not a farming problem. He'll never be able to make it. And that applies to a factory worker or a coal miner or whomever. I've been encouraged in the past three years that this philosophy of classifying them as social problems, in a social area, is taking hold more than ever. Those do-gooders who were trying to force some kind of a legislative program that would keep what they called a family-sized farm--and they were meaning inefficient farms--where you've got to subsidize, every year. That's not a farm problem. It's a social problem.

Baum: In 1949 government price supports were 32 1/2 cents a pound. That seems a lot higher than during the depression, but anyway there was the comment that California growers were making a tremendous profit with this in relation to other cotton farmers, because costs were lower per pound in California.

Camp: Well, you still hear that same kind of argument. The loan price was twelve cents a pound back in 1933--well, that was high compared to, say, twenty-five cents today. Not only in comparison to what the money would buy, but in comparison with the cost of production.

Baum: What do you think about the comment that the parity payment is inequitable in that California growers can grow at a lower cost? Again, this is the Southeastern man who is not so efficient.

Camp: We farm in both places, and we have a hundred times more kinfolks farming back there than here, but I'll repeat what I've said before, just as surely as water runs downhill, crops, livestock, and industry are going to ultimately be grown and marketed and manufactured and so on in those areas where it can be done most economically. I'm talking about free enterprise, not government subsidy. If that can be done in cotton, and if the statements you read were correct, I would say I'm sorry for anybody who has to go out, but let's do this thing where it can be produced cheaper so it then can compete with the man-made fibers, because we're threatened. It's real, not imaginary.

We growers have just set up, and we initiated it in California, a cotton council working with the National Cotton Council, or Institute I guess you'd call it, and we growers are assessing ourselves and now the eastern people are going into it too. I was at a meeting on it two weeks ago, and one little batch (of money) has been given to Cal Poly, some to the University, to make certain studies in cotton, looking toward producing cotton cheaper. We're assessing ourselves, this year it will be twelve or fifteen thousand dollars to put into research.

How we can get the cost of growing cotton down--the price can't come down, we can't grow it until we find out how to grow it cheaper. Some people say they can grow cotton in California today for twenty-two or twenty-three cents. I'm saying frankly, with no reservations, they can't do it, and they'll find out when they get it worked out in the books. Unless cotton is above twenty-five cents it will very quickly disappear from California. I don't know what it will be next year. We may have some new machinery, new chemicals, for completely controlling weeds. But as of today it's got to be above twenty-five cents or cotton can't be grown in California.

As I've been saying now for some two or three years, and emphasizing more and more, boll weevil is the biggest expense that the Southeast has. There is a crash program now on boll weevils to exterminate them, and I say it's going to be. And if it is, the Southeast will have that much advantage over California.

Baum: You mean climatically? They don't have the big irrigation cost.

Camp: No, but they're going to have to set up supplementary water. But that will insure production.

Baum: Then they'll be able to work it out cheaper than we can in California.

Camp: No question about it.

POTATOES IN CALIFORNIA AND MAINE
(July 9, 1963--morning session)

Potatoes Become a Big Crop in Kern County

Baum: We have planned to talk about potato growing and marketing today. I know you are sometimes referred to as "Mr. Potato" as well as "Mr. Cotton."

Camp: We don't even want to hear about potatoes this year. 1963 is a repetition of one of the years two or three years ago. So far everybody, and it looks like it will continue that way through the year, will lose money.

Baum: Too many potatoes were planted?

Camp: Yes, I guess so. Whether too many were planted this year or this plus an accumulation of the processed potatoes of last year and the year before...

Baum: You can hold potatoes over longer now.

Camp: Yes. In the raw state they've got sprout inhibitors they can just spray on the vines before they're dug, or they can spray on the potatoes when they're put in storage, and stop the sprouting. Whether that makes them better eating than if they had sprouts on them I'm not sure, because the longer any potato is stored the more vitamins it loses.

Baum: You started raising potatoes about 1935, wasn't it?

Camp: Well, yes, but potatoes were a small industry in the San Joaquin Valley back in 1918, and '19. Just a few hundred acres were grown, and then in 1920, '21, they grew some more. But only on very rich land. They didn't use any fertilizer, so the acreage was very limited, and never promised to be a big commercial crop.

Baum: They were irrigated, though.

Camp: They had to be. But after the Shafter Experiment Station was started for cotton, L. W. Taylor, the county agent, he and I did some experiments on the station which was on the type of soil that farmers had said previously would not produce potatoes at all, and it didn't. It just refused, the way they were growing it. But he and I tried out different fertilizer combinations and right away quick it was demonstrated that nitrogen we used, ammonia sulfate, caused that sandy land to produce a wonderful crop.

It was then a question of determining when and how much fertilizer to apply, and how to put it on, but as a result of our work on the station we found they could grow potatoes on all soils--except heavy adobe or alkali soils--and the sandier it was, the better it was because it didn't get cloddy, hard, and that turned out to be much better potato soil than where they had been growing small amounts previously, on heavy black soil. Rich black soil, they called it. Some of it was too heavy. Everybody quickly realized that proper fertilization and careful irrigation made all the difference in the world.

Then the growers, always experimenting and trying out new things, settled down to growing potatoes in a big way, and Kern County became the second largest potato county in America--Aroostock County, Maine, being Number One. Sometimes now Idaho grows more than California but there have been years when California grew more potatoes than Idaho. Today, however, Idaho is growing a big percentage for processing. It's a different type of potato, and they can store it and have a supply for processing over a long period of time, whereas most of the potatoes grown in the southern San Joaquin Valley are called "fresh vegetables" and need to be consumed within a few weeks after they are harvested--thin skinned and different varieties.

Factors in Potato Growing

Baum: Can potatoes grow on the same soil as cotton?

Camp: Oh yes. Good cotton soil is very fine potato soil. However,

Camp: cotton will grow on heavier soil than you can grow potatoes in. Good potato soil is always good cotton soil, but cotton is not so particular about types of soil.

Baum: Do the farmers have to make a decision each year whether to grow cotton or potatoes?

Camp: Well, most farmers who grow any potatoes at all have a rotation of cotton, alfalfa, potatoes, and maybe some grain and melons or sugar beets. There are lots of farmers who have never grown potatoes and say they don't want to, because it's more of a gamble with potatoes than it is in cotton or alfalfa. Cotton may not make much money some years but it never loses what potatoes can lose. Potatoes can lose an awful lot of money, and likewise you can make a lot of money in potatoes--more than you can in cotton if it's a good year, a good price. This year all potato growers have grown big crops of prime quality potatoes and the price this year has been very bad.

Baum: Do they rotate the crops for financial reasons, to rotate with what they think the market is going to demand, or do they rotate to improve the fertility of the soil?

Camp: More from a financial standpoint than anything else, not to have all the eggs in one basket. And this gamble in potatoes or onions or lettuce or some of those crops that get high priced sometimes, you make a lot of money. But most of the growers go on and plant it back year after year, and they may lose it again.

Baum: When you change your crop, does that mean you have to change your machinery or revise your labor schedules?

Camp: Well, I didn't make my statement complete. Where a farmer has potatoes or cotton and alfalfa, grapes, and some other crops, he can provide work for labor most of the year, whereas if you only have potatoes, or cotton, or any one crop, then you're definitely limited to how long you can keep that labor--that is, the peak labor demand, working. And that's where the fellows using braceros, well, they don't have work. The orange grower doesn't have work all the year for this kind of labor.

Baum: I'd read some brochure that recommended that potatoes always be rotated with small grains in order to prevent insect infestation.

Camp: Well, it isn't so much insects as it is maybe the scab on the potatoes or some other thing. But you're right. We have to watch out for all those things, just as we do for sugar beets. Last year, for instance, many fields of cotton suffered severely from insects because adjoining it was a new crop of safflower that they didn't realize was a host of some of the insects that are the worst enemy of the cotton plant. So the farmer has to be on his toes. And when you cut an alfalfa patch some of those insects go right over into the cotton field.

Baum: Safflower is a new crop, isn't it?

Camp: Comparatively so. It's not being grown down in Kern County too extensively yet. There are some fields. We're hoping that it will become a permanent crop. It's used for oil, you know. I read an article the other day where someone said it was a fad, (polyunsaturated fat) that there is some fact to all the claims, but not as much as had been attributed to it. However, I do not know. We think that cottonseed oil is just as good.

Baum: Could safflower be as profitable a crop as cotton? You can get two products from cotton.

Camp: Cotton has more than two; it has the fiber, the oil, the meal, and the hulls used for bulk in cattle feed. Safflower, so far as I know, just has the oil. Maybe there's some bulk left, I don't know.

Baum: I think California was always unable to compete in the potato market because, as you say, the potatoes had to be used quickly.

Camp: Quickly, and we have to ship so many of them a long way. The freight bill has been terrific, about two dollars or a little better (per one hundred pounds) from here to Chicago. Two cents a pound, and that means that we have to have awfully good potatoes, which we do, and ship them there in competition with potatoes grown a few miles out of Chicago. We have to go for quality.

Baum: Do you have the problem of getting them there fast enough?

Camp: We put them up in refrigerator cars and they get there in six to eight days, to Chicago, and then on to New York in ten to eleven days. We (W. B. Camp and Son Inc.) ship a lot of potatoes into Quebec, Canada.

Processing of Potatoes--Competition for Fresh Potatoes

Baum: I know they've done a lot of work in Idaho on potatoes for processing. Could potatoes be raised in California that would be as adaptable to processing?

Camp: Yes, and we do raise quite a bit that they use for processing. But in Kern County or the San Joaquin Valley, or even some of the other warmer valleys, we grow a different kind and we don't seem to be able to grow the russet variety, as they grow in Idaho, in the warmer valley. They don't do as well. They can store them for a long period, almost twelve months, ten months anyway.

It's a matter of labor again, and of the overhead, the machinery. They can use the machinery for processing ten months a year. In Kern County and the San Joaquin Valley processing plants dependent upon local potatoes couldn't operate more than four or five months total a year, and that makes an awful lot of difference.

Baum: They also have problems about the amount of starch and granulation of the potatoes that go into processing.

Camp: Yes. They have varieties that are much better suited to processing than certain other varieties. The long white potatoes, which we grow mostly, is a beautiful, delicious potato, but it's like a fruit. When it's harvested, in late April, May and June, it's supposed to be consumed within a few weeks, and you have almost all the vitamins that were in there. There have been government bulletins written on that subject which indicate very thoroughly that every day a potato is out of the ground it loses vitamins.

Baum: It sounds like for Kern County processing is really competition from somewhere else.

Camp: That's right. In the lower San Joaquin Valley, the processing of potatoes is not as attractive to us. In fact, one big processing plant was put up in Bakersfield, ran a few months and went broke. Maybe it was poor management, but when you have to ship potatoes in from somewhere else to keep it going you again have a disadvantage.

There is one advantage that processors have that fresh

Camp: shippers don't have. For instance, we've been harvesting potatoes this year, and from quite a number of fields we would ship say 350 hundred-pound sacks to the market. There might be another 50 or 75 sacks with potatoes just as good, as edible, as what was shipped, but we're not permitted to ship them. However, the processors under the present regulations are able to come get those potatoes and take them to the processing plant. They buy them for almost nothing. When they get all the cracks and all the stem portions and so on out they're just as good for eating, but we, the growers, are not allowed to ship them, and that is unfair competition for the fresh potato growers. Competition in a big way, unfair competition, we say, but processors say otherwise.

Baum: I want you to explain that further. You're not permitted to ship them because you're keeping up the grade, is that right?

Camp: We have to meet a certain standard, U. S. standard put out by the federal Department of Agriculture. Also the health department. For fresh potatoes--they've got to be almost perfect. Very few potatoes can be in there with any blemishes at all, and yet--those go into the culls. We just dump them.

Baum: What happens to the culls?

Camp: It's waste so far as the fresh shipper is concerned, but now the processor has found he can get those for two or three dollars a ton and take them on to his factory, and he'll have a little more waste getting them ready for processing than he would on a real good potato, but he didn't pay much for it so he can well afford to do it.

Baum: He's going to take them over to Idaho where his plant is?

Camp: Well, maybe. There are a lot of chipping plants in Fresno, there are some in Sotckton, many in Oakland and San Francisco, which make potato chips. See, if it's a great big potato, and it grew so fast it has a crack in it maybe--that crack has healed over but it doesn't look good. We have to junk it, we can't ship it.

Baum: Why can't you use it as a--?

Camp: Number two potato?

Baum: Well, why can't you make money on it as a by-product, just as you can on other things?

Camp: The only thing you can do is sell it--.

Baum: To a processor, yes, but at a reasonable price.

Camp: Well, they won't pay you a reasonable price, because they know that it is a cull--by federal and state standards for fresh potatoes.

Baum: So there's no other competition for them.

Camp: That's right. They've got the squeeze on you. They say they're taking culls that we couldn't get even three dollars a ton for otherwise.

Baum: What do you think could be done about that, to make it less unfair?

Camp: I say there ought to be a law that no cull potatoes, no matter from where, can be used for processing. In other words, any potatoes that go off as culls should remain as culls and go for cattle feed, instead of going for human consumption. We as fresh shippers can't ship it, we're penalized. Our competitors shouldn't be allowed to come along and take them.

Baum: You see the processed potato as a competing product.

Camp: Oh, it is. Any potato on the grocery shelf, whether it's a whole fresh potato or in a package, is competing.

Baum: I read that the potato grower now has two markets rather than one.

Camp: That's the beautiful job of promotion that's put out by the processors. They have retained some of the best advertising public relations firms in America to put out their publicity, and it's very fine, but part of the propaganda they put out is that they're helping the grower. But they don't tell you they don't pay him enough to even get it out of his shed.

Baum: It seems your problem is trying to get the price raised.

Camp: No. Our best bet would be to get all the culls rejected for any use except cattle feed or other animal food. We've had a bill in Congress for that. We know that we have too many potatoes sometimes, and we try to hold them back or cull them out, and then we find ourselves hogtied when the processors can come around and get them. Not all of them, maybe, but they get enough to make a terrible situation.

Government Price Ceilings and Supports

Camp: Now, government regulations and supports is one of the things you have listed--I guess you have in mind the potato scandals right after World War II. That came about largely because of the need of food by the armed services. Immediately World War II was declared, they were out saying, "Will we have enough food? Potatoes are one of the things we must have a lot of." They're easy to ship and they're good food. So they (the government) quickly developed rules and regulations for growers, and I was on most of the national federal advisory committees from the inception of it, and they were asking us if we could grow more potatoes and we said, "Yes, if we have any assurance that new land developed or new machinery we buy or new sheds put up will be utilized. We can't afford to do it just for one season unless--"

"Well," they said, "we know that, and we will agree." They did that first year; it was a terrific price.

Quickly they agreed to pay any grower a substantial amount per hundred pounds, subsidize him. In other words, he would sell for what the market price was and the government would pay a stipulated price per hundred weight additional.

Baum: This was to compensate him for his expansion costs.

Camp: Yes. The main thing was to get potatoes, period. But they realized it was not fair to ask us to double production without some sort of guarantee. Prices were pretty good the second year and the third year and they thought they were going to go too high, they were using so many potatoes, and they said, "We'll have to set a ceiling price, as we do on other crops." And they did.

Then the growers said, "Well, if you're going to put a ceiling price so low that a grower can't make much, if any at all, with all the expansion and new machinery and so on--anyway, the grower has spent a lot of money, so there must be a floor price that will see that he doesn't go broke, if the war stops or the price goes down." At first I was given credit for the floor idea--then when the war was over and potatoes were in surplus--I was blamed for the floor idea!

So they said, "All right, we agree to that," and they set a floor price for potatoes, using their best judgment.

Camp: Then after so much time the growers were producing a lot of potatoes, potatoes were running out their ears all over the country. Farmers are able to do this if they're given the right kind of incentive. They saw that with normal and other conditions there was a little money to be made, and they were urged to grow more and more. Well, the farmers responded and then there were too many potatoes and they couldn't sell them. The government didn't object to that floor price at the time because they knew there should be one, because they had a ceiling price.

But as time went on it seemed that for a lot of growers in certain areas the floor price was sufficiently high that they could make good money on it, so they produced more and more for this lower price to sell to the government. They didn't care who got them.

Well, some of us on the committee didn't like that. We thought the floor price should be at the same relative level as a fire insurance policy--it wouldn't cover replacement, it wouldn't cover the cost of growing, but would keep growers from going broke. We had a meeting in Bakersfield on that subject, a national meeting, and I was presiding. We urged the Department of Agriculture--that was '46, I think--to lower the support price to where it would not be an incentive but would be a protection. They refused to do it.

At that time it was very evident that the Department of Agriculture was using potatoes as a whipping boy to get a lot of other control programs that the planning board in Washington wanted. Thereby commences a great story.

Baum: How were they using potatoes? You'll have to explain that to me.

Camp: After the war was over, the planners weren't interested--they never were interested in the growers or the consumers, really, they were interested in socializing agriculture, and these emergencies came along and gave the planners for socialism an opportunity to get to work. Then they said, "We have got to have authority to have complete control and tell you how many acres to plant of everything, and exactly what the price will be." In other words, they wanted to manage all operations of potatoes. They were publicizing it all over the country. We as growers were begging for a lower price and they wouldn't give it to us.

Baum: You wanted supply and demand to operate.

Camp: Yes, and the records show that we made that demand, not request, and they ignored it.

Baum: I don't think all the potato growers agree with you. Weren't there many who were in favor of--?

Camp: The man who was assistant chairman of that program was from Maine and he was there; his name was Harry Umphrey. He and I have some potato land together in Maine now. But all the better growers wanted that type of settlement. A lot of inefficient growers saw an opportunity to make themselves a little money selling to the government, piling it up and letting kerosene be put on it, but that wasn't the bona fide grower. A few maybe, but none of the efficient growers wanted that kind of thing.

We voted it out in Kern County, and the last two years that they had a program of that kind and were piling up potatoes, Kern County was out of it. You had to have a local program in order to participate in it nationally, so we voted it out. We were getting nothing from the government, were completely on supply and demand. I realize that this type of statement, even though the records readily prove it, yet most people don't wish to believe that any farmers would take the above action.

Baum: This included acreage limitation.

Camp: Yes. Then it got so bad in potatoes that Congress passed a law forbidding potatoes as a commodity to have any government support of any kind. So we were completely out in the open for the wolves. Which we preferred to having the other. But it was very unfair, if one looks at the situation sensibly it becomes very clear what happened. To have any commodity be the black sheep, and to have the government say by legislation: "We'll help everything but you." Yes, it got pretty bad in potatoes but many of us think we know who planned it that way.

It (the punitive legislation) has been rescinded, and potatoes now are officially a respectable commodity with the rest of them! If a government program is needed we could have it, but we haven't had a government program with acreage limitation or anything for a long, long time. We had a state marketing agreement about six or seven years ago, and it was in operation for about two years. Then the growers voted that out.

Baum: How did that operate?

Camp: This was when things were pretty smelly, and we said, "All right, if we can have a federal marketing agreement"--what we meant by federal was merely that the government have a permissive law that we could get together and hold potatoes off the market or do what we felt was right, and wouldn't be prosecuted by the federal government as being in restraint of trade or something. That's all we wanted the government in for.

There were others who wanted a state marketing agreement at that time, because the state has a law for such things, and it was put to a vote and because of the division of growers it was voted down. Maybe it was just as well, but anyway some years later the boys set up a state marketing order, and that operated for two or three years. Some of us felt maybe it wouldn't work properly, and sure enough after a while it was voted out. It didn't work properly because we had a state marketing order here just for our area, and Arizona had none, the other states had none, our competitors had none, and we were holding the bag for the others.

Baum: Then would such a plan have to be federal in order to operate?

Camp: I wouldn't say it has to be. There has to be a similar understanding across the country with your competitors.

Baum: And you can't be sure of getting that unless the government is in on it.

Camp: That's the point. People being what we are, we have our own opinions of things.

Baum: You feel that efficient growers can compete without price floors at all.

Camp: I feel that that's the only way to do it. Some of us have asked--there is a bill in Congress now that some of us feel would probably work. It calls on Congress to permit growers nationally to set acreage allotments in all the areas, based on some past history and so on, to be equitable compared to what they've been doing.

There is a little fighting on it by other commodities because it is unique. It wouldn't call on the government to put up one cent--they couldn't, it's not a government program. It's a self help program. The growers themselves could set up rules and regulations and they could penalize their neighbor growers within the marketing agreement.

Camp: Some of us feel that that is the only system that we want--a commodity approach. Citrus people have something similar to it, but not exactly the same. It would be absolutely unique, completely grower run and financed. It's a plan that some of us proposed in a meeting in Chicago about twelve or fourteen years ago, and a couple of other states agreed to it if some of us individuals would take over and operate it nationally. I said I wouldn't do it. I'd lived too many years and that is a job for someone to live with night and day and he had to have religion of this kind to do it properly; but I had too many other things already committed that I had to do.

But this legislation in Congress now is built around the same plan. There would be a national committee to say, "This is what we're going to do," and then it would be done within the areas by the growers. And it can be done.

Baum: It would be compulsory, wouldn't it?

Camp: It would be compulsory dependent on the grower committee. They'd have to evaluate everything. It can work. It's not theoretical, but it takes a lot of doing to get all the people to see that. Then it would require firm, capable administration.

Processors Taking Over Potato Industry

Camp: But right now the processors don't want this. We didn't have the processors fifteen years ago--just potato chips, that's all. But today the processors fight anything that has any semblance of keeping them from getting cheap and cull potatoes. They want cheap potatoes, period. They don't give a whoop about the grower, they want potatoes. The greatest enemy the potato grower has today is the potato processor. It's unfortunate that I have to say that, but I say it now. They deny it. Many of them are going into growing their own potatoes more and more, and they take their own potatoes to the factory. Everything goes to the factory.

Baum: I have understood that in Idaho the system is that the grower takes all the directions from the processor--he gets the financing, the seed, he is told what kind of potatoes to

Baum: grow, the processor sends in a crew to pick them and take them to the factory. It's all contracted before the crop is sown.

Camp: That's going to turn out just as the broiler [chickens] industry has in the Southeast and elsewhere, when the middleman, the feed man, has got in. The greatest poverty that has come about in the last fifteen years in agriculture is the broiler producers, who were small farmers, many of them, and the feed people would go in to sell feed and bit by bit they buy the chicks and put them out and process the chickens, and the greatest poverty I've seen has been that. This other thing, the processors will end up themselves growing the potatoes.

Baum: Well, then the processor will be a grower and will begin to look at it from the point of view of the grower.

Camp: And then you will pay more for your processed mashed potatoes. By the time that happens the fresh potato grower will pretty much be pushed out. It's one of those things. We predict that it's not going to be good for Mrs. America--but there's nothing so constant as change. I make that little speech always, and that's true in agriculture especially.

National Potato Council Organized, 1948

Baum: Now, you were talking about this feeling between the growers and the processors. I'm wondering about the National Potato Council.

Camp: I helped organize that.

Baum: That was organized in December, 1948. What was the purpose of it?

Camp: That came out of association of a lot of us in the government committees that the government asked to advise with them during the war and after the war and so on, and we were able to get together, we saw what was going on.

Baum: Were these the potato commodity committees?

Camp: Yes. I served on the two of them for several years, and went back (to Washington, D.C.) many times. Some of us felt that we ought to have a potato commodity committee of some kind, and as we began to think and talk about it, we said, "Well, we've got to have some recognition of potatoes as a food by the public, because other commodities are being advertised and potatoes have been a commodity of two hundred pounds consumed by everybody, per capita." Then it got down to one hundred and fifty, then it got down to one hundred and twenty-five, then down to one hundred and ten, where it was when we first commenced talking, and then it went on down to about a hundred pounds. Now it's on its way back to one hundred and ten or one hundred and eleven. Talking about potatoes as potatoes, showing what it is as food, undoubtedly has helped some.

We were thwarted in our first efforts to form a national potato council in a meeting in Chicago. The United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association was doing a good job for all fresh fruits and vegetables, or most of them. They begged us to let it be a division of their organization. Some of us said, "It won't work; we want an individual commodity, something we can talk about. Through this organization you have to talk about all of them."

But we were overruled and persuaded and let it go into the United Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, and that's where it stayed.

But a year after it went in we saw it wasn't working to the advantage of potato growers. It was working all right for potato shippers and processors and so on, but not potato growers. We went ahead again and set up a National Potato Council and persuaded Mr. S. A. Wathen, Ft. Fairfield, Maine, to be president of it. The two of us who worked hardest and got it set up, both of us refused--Harry Umphrey and I. Each of us agreed to be vice-president if this other man would take the presidency. Harry Umphrey had just had a heart attack and shouldn't have been president anyway.

So we set it up and it has done a fairly good job--not the best kind of a job in the world, because it's been poorly financed. Shortly after it was set up the processing industry started to process in different ways. First it was just chips, and then french fries, and now they've gone into all kinds of potato processing. It's been a little bit difficult over the

Camp: years to properly finance the National Potato Council, I guess, but it's done a fairly good job.

Our son, Bill Jr., is president of it now, and it's that organization that has been trying to get legislation. It's purely a growers organization.

Baum: You exclude shippers and processors?

Camp: Well, they can be associate members, but growers determine the policy of it.

Baum: What is its function?

Camp: Public relations.

Baum: Advertising for the fresh potato--.

Camp: Yes, potatoes as such, but fresh potatoes in particular. That's the main purpose of it, and to acquaint the public with potatoes as such, as a food.

Baum: It now serves also as a lobby?

Camp: Not necessarily a lobby--information center. Some call it a lobby but it really doesn't do much lobbying.

Baum: I was under the impression that the Potato Council would also encourage other uses of potatoes.

Camp: Yes, it does.

Baum: Doesn't this get into processing again?

Camp: It encourages other uses, but it tries to get the processors to realize that we've all got to work together to get a price that will keep the grower in business. Otherwise, he's gonna pass out, and then if it becomes a monopoly of the processors, the housewife is the one who ultimately is going to pay through the nose. The processors say no, but monopoly is a thing that--. When you have a monopoly you're not going to go broke, if you've got a buying public. All you've got to do is sit down and think about it.

Association to Combat Potato Diseases, 1938

Camp: Several things have happened in California along the line of formation of associations of potato farmers. Way back in '38 the potato industry all over America became badly shook up by a disease that had come in from Germany, some potatoes that they had brought from there for experimental purposes. They didn't realize it had a disease in it, but it developed that it did. Before we knew anything about it, we were losing in California a quarter to a half of our crop, overnight, rotting in the field. We didn't know what it was; then we discovered it was what they called internal bacterial ring rot.

Baum: Wasn't that what happened in the Irish potato famine in 1849?

Camp: I don't know whether it was the same disease, but it was the same kind of thing.

I went to Washington on a potato committee and told about this new potato disease in California and they suggested that maybe we had bacterial ring rot disease. They hadn't discovered it yet in America, but we were digging early that year and the rest of the country didn't dig until later. I came back out here and we sent potatoes to several laboratories and sure enough, we had something very bad.

We quickly got busy, as growers, and decided that we had to do something. We tried to get the University of California to send down some experts on bacteriology and work with us, plant pathologists and so on, and they were too slow about it. We tried to get the federal government to do it and they were too slow and then we tried to get the state Department of Agriculture, and they weren't in a position to do it.

Well, the head of the University of California plant pathology department came down and we talked with him. The head of the same department at Davis came down, Dr. J. B. Kendrick, who was a classmate of mine at Clemson. Finally, after talking to them, telling them we wanted permanent, good men, well-trained, they said, "Why, we both have Ph.D.'s in plant work. You can't possibly use a man more than three

Camp: months out of the year to do a job like this job." I was pretty much shook up over that statement. I said to these two big shots it was a permanent job, an 18-months-in-the-year job.

At the time of this discussion the University did not have a potato specialist at Berkeley nor Davis--nor anywhere else. The questions and answers of these two gentlemen showed a complete lack of knowledge about potatoes in general, and especially about the role of potato seed in a situation such as we were faced with.

Ours was an emergency, so desperate that I felt we had no time to waste in such dialogue. So I excused myself and was off to a potato growers committee meeting. I reported my conference with my classmate, Dr. Kendrick, and his boss, and that I told them we would have to go it without them.

We discussed it and decided to hire our own potato seed man. We didn't know where to get the money but we did know the job had to be done.

So we called the railroads and told them what we wanted, how much money we wanted, and they said, "All right." And that's all there was to it. The county supervisors said, "All right," and the growers put up as much as they could and we had our money. Then we looked around for a few days, to find a good plant physiologist with a potato background. By telephoning all the agricultural colleges and experiment stations we hired a good potato man from outside the state and brought him in. He was from Colorado but he'd never seen this disease, because it was new in America. He determined that it was carried probably by the potatoes.

So he went to work and we organized a committee with constitution and by-laws, and quickly--I say quickly, in the first year he did wonders, in the second year we had it pretty well under control, and by the third year we knew what we were doing and we were on our way, and we saved the potato industry in California. Also this established the pattern of control of this disease for all of America. I've forgotten what we called the emergency organization.

Baum: Was this the Kern County Seed Potato Association?

Camp: It ultimately went into that--that's what came out of it. They still have the association.

We hired the one man, Mr. Carl Metzger; he had to go

Camp: back to his college in Colorado, and we got another one from Nebraska or somewhere, Dr. John McLain (who later became Agricultural Extension potato man for the University), and then he had to go back after two years, so we finally hired another man from Nebraska and he's still with us. T. H. Hankins is the third man who is with us now.

The first man, Mr. Metzger, came on one-year's leave from the University of Colorado. He and I were threatened by some of the big seed growers in the state. They ran full page ads in the Bakersfield papers and others that they were going to sue us and the association, because we quickly made a survey of all fields that had clean seed and those that had unclean seed. We made a list of the fields that had clean seed, that didn't have the disease, and we posted it everywhere and publicized it, and one of the largest seed growers of all, whose name wasn't on the list, claimed it was blackballing them and they were going to sue us. All we could do was say, "Go ahead, we can't help it."

Anyhow, in that way, year after year, we did the same thing, and growers knew they could depend upon that organization to speak fearlessly about seed. So we went ahead and bought some greenhouses to test out all of our seed, and every seed grower's seed, and we planted them in test plots--in Florida and over on the coast and different places.

The railroads put up money as long as we wanted them to, three or four years, and then we didn't need any more, we were self-supporting. We charged so much for the testing of the seed. And it saved the industry from complete destruction.

Maintaining Disease-Free Seed Potatoes

Baum: Do you test the seed or raise it now?

Camp: The grower will raise the seed--let's say I'm a seed grower. I want to test my seed in these laboratories and elsewhere to see if it has any diseases at all. They'll examine my fields ahead of time and plant some of my seed before it's needed commercially, to see if it's good or bad, and if it's

Camp: bad I'm not allowed to sell it--that is, with a tag on it.

Baum: Does the seed potato association then appoint certain growers to grow the seeds and see that they keep the seeds clean?

Camp: No. It works similar to the cottonseed organization except in that respect. The cottonseed organization itself goes out and selects fields that are clean and good growers who will keep them clean; but in cotton we want our clean seed planted on fields that are isolated, and not on a field that had cotton last year because there might be some seeds that have come up from the old cotton. Or if it adjoins another field that isn't pure seed, bees will cross it.

Potatoes are different. We found the disease was carried only in the tuber itself, in the tuber that is planted, and whether it's adjacent to something else has no bearing at all.

Baum: The disease passes from the mother plant to the seed?

Camp: Yes. If you leave lots of it in the field, which you have to if you have a disease, you can never get all the potatoes out, there will never be any infection from them, because they are all rotted and gone before we plant again. That was something we had to learn. We didn't know it.

So long as the seed is clean and so long as you don't cut the seed in preparation for planting--you don't dig it with a machine that's been digging some diseased plants or store it in a place that's had diseased stuff stored in it--.

Baum: So it could be transmitted to clean seed by putting it with other diseased--.

Camp: It can, but not by the soil itself and not by contamination by bees coming from one field to another. It's got to be physical contact. And the grower of potatoes is left entirely on his own. Not many people wish to grow seed potatoes, because it's hazardous, but if you do you've got to have it tested, certified--or take your chances on not being able to sell to anyone with a certified tag.

Baum: Do companies produce seed potatoes that are not members of your association?

Camp: A few do. Some of them have never joined it, and one of them who wasn't a member at that time was one who advertised he was going to sue us and so on, and after a period of years they

Camp: became very good friends of the association. But there are still one or two that do some of their own growing, but they have a seed man on their payroll and they do a pretty good job--a reasonably good job, they feel that it's all right. We feel that our association is completely impartial, impersonal; it's a service association.

Baum: You sustain the organization by the seed grower paying you to do the testing?

Camp: That's right. That is the sole source of support for the seed organization.

Baum: I know you were one of the founders. Who were some of the others?

Camp: E. J. Peters, Ed Peters, was, and so was Milton Lohr. By the way, there's another association in potatoes that Lohr and I organized; we'll come to that later. It follows this one by two years. Harold Pomeroy--he wasn't in on the beginning but he was a director later, and some of the Kirscheman boys--Ed and Will, and Ralph Jacobsen. Many others. They quickly saw that it was an organization that had to be. The Mettler group at first were not particularly co-operative--that is, one of the Mettler group.

Baum: What is the Mettler group?

Camp: [Laughing] E. M. Mettler Company. But they were friendly. They had their own seed organization and they did a pretty good job. Emanuel H. Mettler Company. He was fine, but his son, Orvin, refused to co-operate at all--until in the early sixties. Now they buy their foundation potato seed from--W. B. Camp and Sons, Inc.!

Baum: Growers and seed growers?

Camp: Both.

Baum: I think it's amazing the way the farmers in Kern County organize themselves and get right to work on a problem.

Camp: It had to be done. The potato industry was through unless--.

An Emergency Organization to Raise Prices

Camp: A year or two after that potato prices got awfully low suddenly, and every grower, well, it was just pitiful. They were selling for thirty-five cents a hundred pounds. It was tragic. So we again tried to get the state to do something, and others, and a group of us got together. There was a law on the books, written by the Giannini Foundation, the prorate law,* I believe they called it, and they came down and told us how it would work, and that it could be put into effect almost overnight without any long hearings. Well, we did that, and in less than a week we had a full-fledged, complete, legally-binding organization going, and we persuaded Milton Lohr to take the presidency. Again I took the vice-presidency. You can do a lot of work better sometimes on the sidelines. Milton Lohr worked awfully hard and did a good job. He's dead now.

We just shipped the very best, the cream of the crop, and we had inspectors and watched the trucks that went out, and inside of a very few days the price of potatoes practically doubled and got up to about a dollar, and instead of everybody losing everything they had they came out at the end of the season with a loss, but not a disaster. It's the only time we were able to do that.

For some reason that prorate law went off the books of the state of California a year or two after that. There must have been something in it that was not legal or something. I don't know, but anyhow it worked, perfectly, beautifully. When our prices go down I always think of that; we get to hollering and crying and we wait a long time, but then we just did it overnight and it worked.

If you do that now without a federal enabling act they get you for restraint of trade, just like they did in Salinas ten, eleven years ago, in 1952. The lettuce price got down to nothing and the growers decided they would plow up a third of their fields or something, and bingo, the federal government moved in overnight and said, "You can't do it." They wouldn't let them.

"You growers have got together and conspired to do something that's not fair." Well, they just didn't harvest it. It just resulted in that. You know, if you don't harvest lettuce today, tomorrow afternoon at three o'clock it's too late.

* Agricultural Prorate Law of 1933.

Camp: But this enabling act we're trying to get for potatoes is just to permit us to do the things that are practical that we know sometimes we have to do. We can't do them without the blessings of the government, if that's the way to put it.

Camp Seed Potato Farm in Washington

Baum: You raise seed potatoes now in Washington state?

Camp: Yes. All potato growers for many years ran around the country trying to find out where we could grow some seed, where the best seed was and so on, and we were never able to find a place that was consistently good year after year. It depends on the insects and the weather and the wind and what-have-you. We'd have good seed grown in one area in one year, and next year we'd have virus diseases again--not this internal rot, but other diseases.

Finally we discovered that up in the northwest corner of the state of Washington is the finest place we've yet discovered to grow seed, that we can year after year know that we're going to have good clean seed. We have two or three men up there whose lifetime has been potato seed and insect work, and they're at it all the time. They rogue it--this means that we take a potato and cut it in four pieces and plant that, skip a little, cut another potato and put down the four pieces and skip a little, and the same all over several hundred acres.

Our men, right now up there, are walking over those fields, and if their trained eyes see one leaf that is bad they'll examine it, and if they aren't sure that it's good they'll pull not only that one plant out but the other three. Meaning that tuber is gone. They pull up the plants, put them in a sack, and destroy it. The whole field is operated that way.

Baum: Rogueing is checking each plant?

Camp: Yes. The rogues are the ones that are off-type. Up there now I guess there are six men who day after day just walk up

Camp: and down those fields. That's what I did all the early years when I was in charge of the breeding work at Shafter in cotton. It's hot work, hard work, but it's something that has to be done. That's something we can't mechanize. Nothing takes the place of our eyes.

Camp Potato Farms in Maine

Baum: And you also raise potatoes in Maine with Harry Umphrey?

Camp: Yes. He's recognized as probably the best potato man up there. Just three weeks ago his wife died. He's been having heart trouble for the last ten years and we were fearful for him daily, but without warning he lost his wife. That's one of the reasons I couldn't come up here earlier.

Baum: Is there any difference in the potato operation in Maine compared to California?

Camp: It is unique, I don't know whether I want to say very different. It's different, it's a short season and they grow a different variety than we do. They plant it after the ground is thawed out, they plant it in a hurry, and they grow very fine crops. That's the only county I know of where there is every year enough water so they don't need to irrigate at some time or other. It seems to be ideally suited. They may grow potatoes on the same land for two years, sometimes just one year, but the following year they'll plant clover or a cover crop and then plow that under and then go back to potatoes.

Baum: Does this mean they don't have to use fertilizer?

Camp: Oh, they use a lot of fertilizer, but this heavy crop of clover they plow under, it puts lots of humus in the soil and helps it retain moisture, makes it loose also. That's a part of their farming operation. That's the only place I know where they do it in that way.

Aroostook County as such has potatoes and potatoes and potatoes. Now they're growing garden peas, and canning them. They have some big factories in there--Birdseye and others--

Camp: but with the exception of peas, potatoes is the only other commercial crop they have. They have some grain and chickens, but they are considered a potato county. And when the potato industry is not good, the economy is not very good. But there's lots of frozen process plants going in there now.

Baum: It was in Aroostook County I think that they wanted price floors.

Camp: They're divided there now more than they were years ago, but there are lots of small growers who years ago were able to make good money, but years ago small cotton growers in the Southeast were able to make a go of it. Our family was able to make a living--not money, but enough cash to buy what we needed, and we raised the rest, but you can't farm like that any more. In Aroostook County there are a lot of smaller growers in the same category as I was growing cotton in South Carolina in the early days, who refuse to believe they can't forever do what they have done. It just can't be done.

Baum: Those potatoes hit the market at a different time than your long whites?

Camp: Yes. They harvest at a different time; they harvest in September and early October, and then they rush them into storage cellars and they go through the winter.

Baum: So those potatoes will store better?

Camp: Oh yes. They've got a thick skin on them. But they also put sprout inhibitors on them to hold them. They've got potatoes in Maine now that were harvested last September. Ten years ago they didn't know anything about sprout inhibitors and they had to sell them all prior to the first of May. Now they've got them in July. Not as good to eat, but they go ahead and use them, put them in as processed potatoes. The difficulty is, the early processed potatoes, the green, young potatoes, just dug, have got most of the vitamins. I don't know what the answer is to that.

(End interview July 9, morning)

W. B. CAMP--AMERICAN FARMER
(July 10, 1963--morning session)

Operation of Large, Diversified Farms

Baum: I think we've been talking more or less generally about farming in the San Joaquin Valley; this session will be more on how you run your operation as a sample farmer. Do you think your operation is representative of the way San Joaquin farms run?

Camp: Yes, I think so. It's representative of a certain type of farming.

I grew up in one kind of farming, and that kind of life was wonderful at that time. Having experienced that personally, and having studied agriculture over the country, there's no doubt, and hasn't been for a long time in my mind, but what farmers have got to have a unit in whatever they're farming large enough to permit them to buy equipment and operate that equipment as much as possible, so as to have the overhead spread as thin as possible.

We have tried to do that--not necessarily wanting to be big, but we have increased in size as we've gone along. We have three sons and we delegate a lot of authority to those boys, and on each unit we have a resident foreman. His job is to direct the details of the work. We grow many crops: cotton, potatoes, alfalfa, sugar beets, sometimes melons, grapes, oranges and almonds in California; from time to time we have onions and other crops. But each foreman has enough acreage to keep him busy outlining and overseeing the details, the irrigation, planting, cultivation, harvesting.

Baum: How much land can one foreman manage?

Camp: It depends entirely on the crops involved.

Baum: In some crops a small acreage is a big job.



V.B. Camp and his son V.B. Camp, Jr. inspecting field of Acacia Cotton. 3 bales per acre yield.



V.B. Camp and Mrs. Camp with 1600-pound herd bull the Silver Hair 3. Picture taken in South Carolina on their farm "Camp's Cross Roads" where they have about 2000 head of cattle in Cherokee County, S.C. 1939.



Left in Right. Donald M. Camp, V.B. Camp and V.B. Camp, Jr. At the potato shed where washing, grading and packing of the potatoes for the market take place. Back of them are the women working on the grading belt.



Donald M. Camp checking the harvesting of onions. About 1946 the Camps broke the world yield record on onions.

Camp: That's right, and that's why I say we do not have any formula. We do not try to operate on a formula basis.

Then there are some foremen, and some managers, who have more capacity than others. Say two fellows, one can operate one thousand acres and another one five hundred equally well, but if you give the one thousand acres to the five hundred-acre man, he'll become frustrated and so on. Some of our foremen manage two thousand acres. As I often say, we just play by ear, and we try to fit these fellows into the jigsaw puzzle.

Qualities and Duties of the Managerial Staff

Baum: What characteristics do you look for in your managers?

Camp: Well, of course there are basic characteristics that everybody looks for, honorable men of integrity and character and so on. None of our people are carousers, we never have seen much whiskey or anything around the place. Some people don't object to that, some of us do.

We're not looking just for a college graduate; a few years ago a fellow who had been an irrigator and then a tractor driver, had done everything, I pulled him off and put him in as general superintendent in charge of all of the farms (our sons were still in service and in college). This boy, it turned out--I didn't realize it at the time, but he was an Oklahoma boy, had come out with the migrants, a fine ambitious young fellow. I put him in charge of everything, and after a while I found out he didn't even know how to read and write. But that didn't make any difference; he was one of the best foremen we've ever had. He had native ability.

While I was in Washington on one of these trips, I got back and found out that he had fired one of the foremen, and it met with my approval, and that particular foreman was a college graduate. But this boy who couldn't read or write was so much better than the other fellow.

We are looking for good men, and sometimes they're hard

Camp: to find. But we've been able to find them among people who came out here as migrants. Most of the foremen we've got today came from Oklahoma, Texas, or Arkansas during the migration. This same boy was the one pictured in Look magazine in the October, 1939 issue, burning The Grapes of Wrath. I was there with him.

We do have to have people who are qualified in the sciences. Farming is no longer just labor. We've got to know the insects and the diseases and the many things that can make for success or failure, so we also have to have men trained in the sciences. Our youngest son has just graduated in horticulture. The one ahead of him was in animal husbandry and the one ahead of him was in agronomy, field crops. When they get lined out, why, it's a pretty good combination.

Baum: About how many people do you have in the managerial positions? Do you have a general superintendent now, or have you divided it up among your sons?

Camp: It's somewhat divided up among the sons, and along with the farming one of the sons will take the potato shed operation, washing and grading, and another one the seed operation, and another one will take the cotton gin along with the farming (he is supervising). Then we have fruit shipments and so on. It is divided up somewhat and yet we're all interested in all of it and each and every one can get in and help out on everything.

We have highly trained men in charge of our seed potato work in Washington state. This is extremely important work because we here grow all our seed potatoes that we bring to Kern County for commercial planting. We must have seed that will produce a big crop--and it must be free of all diseases.

Our reputation for the fine job done here during the past twenty years is such that most other growers of California White Rose potatoes try to get their foundation seed from us. This in states from here to, and including, North Dakota.

We also have a citrus superintendent who looks after all technical details of our orange operations, also a superintendent in charge of all our vineyard or grape operations.

Naturally these two men must be and are very competent in their field.

Baum: So on each unit of land you have a resident foreman? Is there anyone in charge of all the foremen?

Camp: Yes, the sons coordinate all that work.

Baum: Then do you have to have other managerial people--say, someone in charge of all the machines?

Camp: Well, yes. We do have a superintendent of machinery, a head mechanic, and he has quite a number of mechanics working for him. I don't know how many, but they service the machines for all the lands. We make some of our machinery, and most of it that we do buy we have to repair even before we use it, to make it stronger and more durable.

We have a blacksmith shop and a machine shop where all the repair work is done, and then the head mechanic has a repair truck that goes all over. When the boys have a breakdown and telephone in from the car that they need help out in a certain field, he goes out quickly with the repair truck.

The same thing applies to potato shed operations. There's a lot of machinery involved there. It's not just hauling potatoes to the shed and putting them on a train. There are thousands of dollars that go into potato harvesters and shed equipment; this in order to do the job today that is necessary to turn out the best potatoes.

Baum: How about shipping, or selling?

Camp: We have a manager of our sales and purchasing department, and he busies himself with all commodities. He has some help.

Baum: He takes care of your purchases in things like fertilizer--.

Camp: Everything. Everything pertaining to the farming.

Baum: And he also makes the best deals on the selling?

Camp: Yes.

Baum: Is there someone in charge of freighting and shipping?

Camp: That is his department too. When I say that he buys everything,

Camp: I do not mean miscellaneous things that the foremen have to have daily; I'm talking about the overall--fertilizer, seeds, equipment.

Employees Prefer Home Living to Bunkhouses

Baum: How about cooks, cooking?

Camp: All through the valley today, there is not nearly the number of cookhouses that existed twenty-five years ago. In fact there are very few today, two or three outfits--DiGiorgio's one of them--seem to like cookhouses and operate with a lot of single men. They use a lot of braceros. But we operate with families who live in their own homes, either in nearby towns and communities, or in homes we provide on the ranch. In that way we don't have to have any cookhouses or bunkhouses, and from our standpoint we like it better.

Baum: You don't have any facilities for single men?

Camp: I think the operation of ranches as it used to be, with big bunkhouses and eating houses and so on, in the San Joaquin Valley, is more and more going to go out the window. Kern County Land Company used to be one of the biggest in that, and I think today they have none.

Baum: How can a young man live, then? Can he get room and board?

Camp: Automobiles have changed things an awful lot, and he can live nearby or he can make arrangements to live with one of the families. Some of them do that. Or some of them have little trailers they haul around and can put on any ranch they want to, and either eat with somebody else or in a restaurant nearby. We have quite a number of single men who 'batch.'

In fact, at the moment, our youngest son, who finished college last January, is living in a small house on one of the ranches twenty-five miles away from us, doing his own cooking (sometimes) and getting along fine. He can get up and out at daylight, whereas if he lived with us he'd have

Camp: to drive that distance. And he's not confined to that one ranch.

Baum: Do the supervisory people stay with you a long time?

Camp: Most of our regular men now have been with us since the beginning of time. We've got fellows that have been there since we started out in the early thirties.

Baum: How are you going to replace those men?

Camp: Well, we have others coming on. We have a system of retirement similar to other businesses; when they reach a certain age if they want to quit they can retire or move away to the coast somewhere. They do.

Labor and Working Foremen

Camp: We get an awful lot of good workers from the migrants, the Mexican-Americans, and the Negroes that come in.

Baum: Is there material there for supervisory personnel? How about the Mexican-Americans?

Camp: Oh yes.

And we have a lot of fine Negroes who bring out in the peak periods busloads of Negroes, who have their own homes in town but in order to make some extra money they come out. But those Negroes are the field foremen of whatever the crop or operation is, under the resident foremen.

Baum: A sort of labor contractor on an informal basis.

Camp: Yes, plus working foremen, because they've got to be skilled themselves.

Baum: Do you ever use labor contractors?

Camp: We do, because in recent years it has become the custom. We prefer to hire them direct, but this other seems--they've got their license from the state.

Camp: Well, we're now, unfortunately for those laborers, harvesting most of our potatoes with machines. We went to that only because some agitators, primarily because some agitators caused us considerable worry threatening strikes and so on, so we had to be sure we could harvest and we went out and helped develop some machines and bought them and they're now doing most of our potato harvesting. Like the cotton picking machines; we don't have any hand pickers any more on our ranch. One man driving a two-row cotton-picking machine can harvest as much as seventy-five or one hundred hand pickers.

Baum: In what crops do you have a peak season when you need extra help?

Camp: We still have some hand labor in potato sheds at harvest time in potatoes, but most of it is machines. We're harvesting watermelons now; that is hand labor. I don't think we'll soon get a machine that can pick watermelon up off the ground and select them and tell which is ripe and which isn't. [Laughter] That is still hand work.

Baum: I suppose other ranches around there do use more hand labor than you do.

Camp: Yes, some of them use more than we do. And of course, in alfalfa it's pretty much mechanized, but we have to have some handwork for that. Not a lot.

In the grape harvest we still have to have a lot of hand labor, though I predict machine harvest soon. We used to do all the pruning of grapes by hand. We still do it by hand, but we have several electrically-operated pruning shears. One man can take one of those and do as much as several men did by hand labor.

The orange harvest is by hand, so far. We have considerable oranges, and we're still planting them.

Baum: I didn't realize that oranges had moved so far north.

Camp: Down in Los Angeles, San Diego and Orange Counties most of the orange land is now residential and commercial territory. Some years ago oranges were pushed out because of industrial plants and houses and so on. They've got to grow them somewhere, if people want to eat oranges. We do grow very fine oranges in Kern and Tulare Counties, and in my judgment probably twenty-five years from now the southern San Joaquin Valley will be the orange belt of California.

Baum: Is that right? I didn't realize that.

Camp: Yes. Not all over the valley; you have to keep in the areas that have been proven to be a little more frost free than others.

Baum: When you use a labor contractor, what services does he provide for you?

Camp: He gets the labor; he know where to get it and gets them, transports them to the ranch and takes them back, supervises them while on the job. He sees that they do what we have outlined must be done, the way it must be done. He is responsible for the quality of work they do, and if we see that they're not doing it, it's up to him to take that one off and get someone else.

He gets paid, usually so much per head, but it depends on the kind of work done. If the potatoes are being picked up, it's so much a sack; the laborer will get so much and he will get a fraction. But the overall will pay him for what he's doing.

Baum: You don't pay him for the job and then he pays the laborers?

Camp: We do that in some work; some growers pay him entirely, but they see that he pays the others. There's no set way of paying, but so far as we're concerned, we insist that we know that these laborers themselves get paid.

Baum: So you pay them.

Camp: Or we see that he does. It depends on the job.

Baum: Does it save you considerable trouble, to use a labor contractor?

Camp: It does, but so far as I'm concerned I would prefer the other because it makes us have a closer relationship with the individual, more so than it does through the contractor.

Baum: Through the contractor you have no relationship.

Camp: Well, we do. We're out there working with them, and if it's a long job, year after year the same workers come back so you develop a pretty good relationship.

Baum: Can you pretty well leave things to your supervisory people,

Baum: or do you have to keep an eye on what's going on?

Camp: Well, we are sometimes hard to please, I guess, in that we want the jobs done just right. We don't like to say we're perfectionists, but we do want to make sure that things are as well done as we know how to get it done, and we do, through the boys and myself too. We're on the job circulating, every day. We feel that the best fertilizer that we put out on these crops is the tracks of the owner!
[Laughter]

Baum: You switch to machinery either because it's more economical or you're going to have trouble with labor and don't want to be caught--.

Camp: Both. We definitely wouldn't have bought potato-harvesting machinery when we bought it--ultimately we probably would have, but the agitators (not the regular labor) were causing trouble and it's difficult to have peace of mind with those kind of people around. We've only got one marketing per each crop per year, and if there is labor trouble we have lost a year's work. It's as simple as that.

Custom Contractors for Fertilizing, Baling, and Dusting

Baum: Do you ever use a custom contractor to do something like fertilizing?

Camp: Well, we often have the same man who knows he's going to be called on to fly his planes, to fertilize something or to put down some dust or some liquid. We pay him so much per acre or per pound, whichever way it works out. But it is custom or contract work.

We do the same with hay baling. At the moment, for several years, we have been contracting. We have a contractor who can get enough acreage to keep his machines busy every day, and he can do it for less than the owner who has a machine and only keeps it busy maybe a third of the time.

The same is true with dusting. We thought of having

Camp: our own crew for that, but we could only use it on the crops we grow. This man, who has a fleet of planes and a bunch of pilots, can use it not only on the crops that we and the neighbors both grow, but on other crops that need attention at different times. It's cheaper for us that way.

We have our own entymologist and plant pathologist examining things at all times, but at the present time an arrangement has been worked out with the fertilizer and pesticide companies, who have specialists who live in an area and circulate all the time around the farms advising the growers. Most growers do not have their own entymologist or pesticide man. They rely on a company. They have double-checking on these commercial fellows, though, by the experiment stations and Extension people and the government, and many growers, like ourselves, have men who know what needs to be done in all these departments.

Baum: Is your entymologist on your payroll permanently?

Camp: We have boys who know entymology and plant diseases quite well, and they check and double check. It's a system that's working out quite well.

Baum: Are there a lot of good consultants in the Bakersfield area?

Camp: Yes. Many of them live there permanently. Standard Oil is one of the parent companies, and they wouldn't dare let a subsidiary company give some bum advice if they knew it, because we buy gasoline from them too. The chances of a racket being carried on are very remote. There will be some who don't know their job, and when you're depending on judgment, even the best can be wrong sometimes. That's where our double checking comes in and pays off.

Deciding What Crops to Plant

Baum: How do you decide to change from one crop to another?

Camp: From year to year?

Baum: Yes. You say you're putting in oranges, for example,

Camp Cited for Record Yield

"Many years ago, my son and I talked about certain goals we wanted to reach. We recognized farming was tough — and going to get tougher. Our main goal was to produce a little bit more of a little bit better than average crop and we'd come out all right."

With these words, W. B. Camp spoke of himself and his son, Donald, at a luncheon honoring W. B. Camp and Son Ranch for setting a new world's record in sugar beet production.

Obviously the goal is being reached as the Ortho Division of the Chevron Chemical Company attested by giving the luncheon and presenting a special plaque to Donald Camp.

The Camp world's record yield of an average of 57.92 tons-per-acre of sugar beets on an 80-acre field was produced on land just west of Freeway 99 between Lerdo and Famoso.

In addition, the harvest more than doubled the average yield of sugar beets per acre which is about 20-22 tons. The sugar content of the crop — also outstanding — was 13.36 per cent, yielding 6.91 tons of sugar per acre. (For terms of comparison, a sugar production of four tons per acre is considered excellent.) The harvest was also "sweet" news for the Holly Sugar Company, which had contracted for the production from the 80-plus acreage. For example, 6.91 tons of sugar per acre means about 1,751,400 sugar cubes—enough to sweeten more than a million cups of coffee.

W. B. Camp is one of the nation's most prominent agriculturalists and currently is an adviser to the Secretary of Agriculture. He came to California during the 1920s when he established the

state's first USDA extension station at Bakersfield. He later went into farming on his own, and is credited with "bringing cotton to California"—successfully growing the predominantly southern crop in the San Joaquin Valley.

But the world's top sugar beet production is primarily an achievement by his son, Donald. The younger Camp worked closely for several years with Don Wigzell, sales representative for the Ortho Division of Chevron Chemical in applying a special fertilization program to the ranch's sugar beet acreage. The plan was based on a formula supplied by the Ortho agronomy department through the regional agronomist, Dr. Jim Thorup, and was an extension of the Ortho Break-the-Yield-Barrier program.

Essentially, it consisted of application of Ortho 8-24-0 Starter Solution at planting time, followed later in the season with side dressings of pelleted aluminum nitrate. Standard cultural practices were used.

Camp attributes the record crop to a combination of two major factors: The Ortho fertilizer concept and the ideal growing conditions that existed throughout the season. The program is being repeated this year.

Dr. M. H. (Mac) McVickar, national director of agronomy of the Ortho Division for Chevron Chemical, and creator of the Break-the-Yield-Barrier program, was in Bakersfield to present personally to Donald Camp the world yield record plaque.

Making introductions as master of ceremonies and speaking for the company was David Barlow, general manager of the Ortho Division, from San Francisco. Others from the Bay Area

office were Harris N. Carter, general sales manager of the fertilizer division and Louis F. Czufin, manager of public relations.

Mrs. W. B. Camp was also an honored guest at the luncheon which was attended by representatives of Holly Sugar Company, and branch

and regional management personnel for Ortho. National farm news magazines and newspapers covered the award luncheon.



W. B. Camp and Son Ranch has produced the world's record yield of sugar beets on an 80-acre field north of Bakersfield and was given an award by the Ortho Division of Chevron Chemical Company presented by Dr. M. H. (Mac) McVickar, creator of Ortho's Break-the-Yield-Barrier program. Seen at the Camp award luncheon are Harris N. Carter, general sales manager for the Ortho fertilizer division, Dr. McVickar, Donald Camp, Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Camp and Seldon Morley, Kern agriculture commissioner.

Camp: Well, we just feel that people are going to continue to want oranges and if they can't grow enough of them down south because the land is being used for something else, and if we can grow them, our judgment is that it's a pretty good gamble.

Mrs.

Camp: It's based on research and study of public consumption and availability of a particular crop to the public.

Baum: Well, suppose you have acreage which you're thinking about switching to oranges, but it already has a crop that is producing profitably. What is the process you go through before switching?

Camp: You mean if it is a profitable field crop, annual crop. If it's in grapes and doing well, why, you're not likely to take out the grapes unless they're doing badly. We did take out a lot of grapes in the thirties, but they weren't paying. But if it's a field crop, beans or alfalfa, the price for those crops is up and down, and of course it is for oranges too.

There aren't many places in our county (or state) suitable for oranges, it's got to be a specially suited place for oranges, so if we've been planting annual crops and decide to plant oranges, we simply put the field crops somewhere else, on some other land. Under the government program now you're not allowed to put all your land into cotton or sugar beets, but also you might, as we did recently, go and buy a piece of land in an area you think is suitable for oranges. That's what we've done.

You just use your best judgment and get all the information you can, and then determine you're going to do it. We have no guarantee we'll make money on them, but then we have no guarantee we'll make money on cotton or potatoes. We didn't make money on potatoes this year. I don't dare tell you how much money we lost, because it's pretty big. We hope to make it back. [Laughing]

It hurts, it hurts very much, but we knew it might hurt and we were willing to take the chance. Frankly, in our case that's why we have several crops. It's a depression if all our crops are going to lose money the same year, and we're not looking for that, so we want several crops. If one of them is bad we hope the rest will make a little profit and make up for that. We've been fortunate most of the time.

Camp: Oranges is just another crop, and we're planting it for just that reason. A variety of crops, diversification.

Baum: Just like you do with stocks.

Camp: Precisely the same thing. A farmer puts it in the land. It's lots of fun, but lots of gamble.

Baum: Unless a farmer has one crop that he always raises, he has to make a decision each year as to what he's going to plant.

Camp: Well, many years ago, it got into my mind that you can't make money chasing prices. I don't know where I got it, maybe from my father. But nobody is smart enough to be in and out, in and out, and hit the high market on each crop every year. You can't foresee that.

So we have a system of planting a certain percentage of our total acreage in different crops, year after year. If our judgment tells us, before a certain year comes along, "Well, it was good last year and it might be bad this year," well, we debate a long time among ourselves and decide whether we're going to plant as much or more or not as much and so on. I have no formula on that.

Baum: You get together with your sons.

Camp: Oh yes. As a matter of fact, they get together first and make some outlines and then we get together and debate whether that's what it ought to be. They know the individual pieces of land and the rotation system better than I do, and the detail of it is left pretty much to them. But we together all decide what we're going to do.

Baum: You rotate the crops for the soil.

Camp: Yes. We rotate as much as possible. We don't have any fixed formula there, however, because you've got to play it by ear. From the fertilization standpoint you're able now to replace more in the soil than you used to by commercial fertilizers, but from the standpoint of diseases we still rotate more than might be necessary.

I want to insert something right here that just occurred to me. All this bunkum about soils that have been farmed so long it's ruined, played out, there is no such thing. Sure, there's eroded land that hasn't had fertilizer put back into it, but all it takes is just a little while. If it was good land yesterday--of course, if the water has washed all the

Camp: topsoil off, you've got to work long enough to get some humus back in it, but if it's just a question of lack of fertility or drainage, if it was good land before, pretty soon you can make it good land again, by putting in the proper chemicals. I think that is recognized more and more by intelligent people.

They say there are no longer any frontiers in land. Well, the frontiers are on the same farms that were farmed three hundred years ago. Most of those lands will be producing one hundred and fifty years from now two or three times as much as they are producing today. We're not going to run out of land in America on which to grow food.

Baum: You've mentioned a lot of crops that you grow, and I wondered if there are any particularly interesting aspects in any of those crops.

Camp: Well, we've talked about cotton and potatoes, and of course alfalfa is generally understood by everybody.

Baum: How many crops a year do you get from alfalfa?

Camp: How many cuttings? We cut our alfalfa seven times a year, and the eighth time we don't cut it because it's too dangerous in the fall, we might have bad weather and it wouldn't cure. So we graze it off mostly with sheep--not our own sheep. There are sheepmen in the area who are anxious to come, and we get a good payment every year. Our eighth cutting is always a bounty. If we cut it it would probably often be a loss, but by grazing it we're sure of a profit on our eighth crop.

Baum: Don't sheep damage the plants?

Camp: No, they just graze it down, and if you keep them moving around and don't let them sleep too many nights in one spot, you're all right.

We average in tonnage better than ten tons a year. This year it's a profit. Last year and the year before alfalfa for everybody was a loss. The price was cheap. So they didn't plant much new alfalfa this last fall, they plowed up quite a bit, and there was a shortage and the price is better. If we could just make sure we could do that all the time, and get people not to plant too much, it would be wonderful. But being what we are, individualists, we're going to be in and out.

Camp: I guess you've got the story on grapes from a lot of people. I'm not an expert at all; I grow a lot of grapes, though.

Baum: Do you grow table grapes or wine grapes?

Camp: Both. We have several varieties of grapes. Some of our table grapes we sell the whole field; somebody comes along and wants to buy it and harvest them themselves. We let them do it if they pay enough. We send a lot of grapes to the winery. We sell a lot of them on the vine and let them ship them back East. There are different ways of marketing grapes.

Baum: Isn't it difficult for you to grow so many different kinds of crops?

Camp: No. It actually keeps us busy and keeps us on our toes. We also have got sense enough now to know that we can get some better advice than our own, concerning grapes, and we get those people out to advise us. Sometimes we have to pay them, but we also call on the Extension Service, the experiment stations, and so on, for crops we don't specialize in ourselves, and we get the best judgment they've got. Most farmers do that today.

But having the different crops and having a little more acreage than maybe we had to start with makes it an easier operation, but it keeps us busy, frankly. We know that we've got no time, no two or three or four months that we've got nothing to do. We've got to be here most of the time, and we like it. There are farmers who have just one crop and they say they like it better, they just have to buy one type of machinery. There's something to be said for it.

Baum: Do most of the farmers in the San Joaquin Valley have diversified crops like you do, or do they specialize more?

Camp: There are both types, but more of them have two or more crops than have one.

Baum: Potatoes and cotton are often linked together.

Camp: Yes, but there are a lot of people who don't go into potatoes at all, and don't want to. They realize there's a great hazard. You make a lot on them or you lose. But it's rather fascinating, even though you lose money, if you think you can make it up on something else.

Baum: Do you raise cattle in California?

Camp: At the present time we do not. Our cattle operations are in South Carolina now.

To Buy or Lease Acreage

Baum: How did you get started? You had some land in 1937, when you got back from Washington.

Camp: Yes, I had a little. I bought a little farm when I was in government work, but I rented it out. Then I bought a little more and rented that out. I rented it to my brother, who came out later. As time went on we just acquired a little more.

Baum: Did you buy or lease at first?

Camp: Both. Bought a little and leased a lot. As the years went by we acquired a little more and leased some. Nearly every year we have bought a little more.

Baum: Is this a policy, to buy a little more every year?

Camp: No. We've never had a policy on that, but if somebody wants to sell some pretty badly and we think it's a good buy and can find some money somewhere, we buy it.

Eleven years ago, in November of '52, I never wanted any more vineyards because I'd been with the Bank of America in the Depression, and I just knew I didn't want any. But a man hunted me up and said, "We've got 2200 acres of vineyards and a winery up here at Delano and we want to know if you'll join us as partner." I didn't know this fellow-- he sent his son-in-law down. "If you'll join us or buy it..." So we investigated, and we bought it. They had lost money heavily the year before but it's been highly profitable ever since. We didn't intend to buy any vineyards, but since then we've also planted some more vineyards.

We didn't intend to go into the orange business, but people were just moving in down south so much digging up orange orchards, we just decided to do it in Kern County. Our purchases have all of them out here been from people who were distressed for one reason or another, some family

Camp: reason they wanted to sell.

Baum: You haven't gone out purposely to buy, then.

Camp: That's right.

Baum: What are the advantages of leasing land to buying?

Camp: Whether there is an advantage is debatable sometimes, but if there's a piece of land you'd like to farm and it's not for sale and you can rent it, why, you have no choice but to lease it. That is the situation in most of the land that's leased down there.

Baum: It's just not available for sale.

Camp: There's not much land for sale.

Baum: The Kern County Land Company has had a lot of land tied up for a long time.

Camp: They sold land up till around the early forties, when they withdrew everything they had from the market. They're not selling farmland now.

Baum: You do lease a lot of land from Kern County Land Company?

Camp: Yes. Some of it we lease from them was already promised to sell us before we leased it, and with the change in the policy of the company they decided not to sell any more.

Baum: Is it advantageous for you to lease it?

Camp: Well, we personally would rather own land. We wouldn't want to be farming land that was all leased, but when you're leasing it and you don't want to continue farming it you can turn it loose, and you haven't got your taxes and your overhead. I haven't looked at it that way but some people do. Many farms were acquired during the depression by the Bank of America that the owners didn't owe a penny on in 1928. In a case like that a fellow is better off leasing.

Diminishing Water Supply

Baum: How limiting a factor is water?

Camp: It is quite a limiting factor. If there was ample water in the San Joaquin Valley today, the acreage under cultivation would increase by probably a third. Where they've had plenty of water, they've been pumping so long and there hasn't been enough replenishment, much of that water has gone from twenty-five feet below the surface to four, five and six hundred feet below the surface. Unless additional water is brought in from northern California, and soon, it's going to be quite bad for a lot of people.

Baum: Where do you get your water?

Camp: We have pump water available on all of our operations, and on several of them we have pumps only. But on most of them we have canal water available and we can get supplemental water from the canals. We can get along without any supplemental water at the present time, but if we have to go on many more years--certainly we couldn't go on indefinitely, with the water going down, down, down.

Baum: Are these public irrigation districts or the Kern County Land Company--?

Camp: Well, one of them is an old district out in the east of Bakersfield; the Eastside Canal is owned by a subsidiary of the Kern County Land Company, and I have a permanent water supply right there. But I also have pumps in case of a dry year. Then the Wasco-Shafter district, and we're also in the Delano-Earlimart district. There's another district west of Wasco, by the name of Semitropic. Just north of Bakersfield there is another district which is a subsidiary of the Kern County Land Company, but we have some land that is our own in the same district. There is no water available on our land yet.

Baum: Does that mean you aren't farming that land?

Camp: Yes, I'm farming it with wells.

Baum: Do irrigation district affairs take much of your time? I'm thinking of the public districts where you vote and have meetings.

Camp: No. Well, our son Don is devoting considerable time to it. I devote some, Bill some, but not too much. Don is a member of the county water association, and one's enough out of a family to be attending it. He's president of the Cawelo water district.

Leasing Mineral Rights

- Baum: What about your oil interests? This is incidental to your farming, is that right?
- Camp: [Laughing] Farming doesn't have anything to do with that; that's the oil company, which has its geologists go out and nose around and if they think they have a chance they'll try to get some land and drill a hole, exploring. I believe that only one out of every sixteen or some such matter is productive. No farmer ever feels--ever takes a drilling job seriously until after they come up with something.
- Baum: So if an oil company asks you, you'll give drilling rights, but without banking very much on results.
- Camp: You may not give him the privilege; they usually pay a little something.
- Baum: Yes, that's what I meant. [Laughing]
- Camp: It depends on whether it's a hot prospect. If somebody's found a well close by that's red hot, why, the farmer gets red hot too. But I haven't had any like that.
- Baum: You haven't hit oil on any of your land?
- Camp: I mean that there hasn't been one adjoining that's made mine red hot. [Laughing]
- Baum: I thought that an oil company had hit oil on some of your land.
- Camp: Yes, but they had drilled and drilled on the edge of it and there wasn't any there, and then a little company came along and drilled and found something.
- Baum: You retain the land, and lease the mineral rights?
- Camp: Yes. So there's nothing for a farmer to do.
- Baum: Does this ever damage your farming operations?
- Camp: Yes. Yes, it does. Unless there's enough money in it, it can be a nuisance. But farmers are poorly paid as

Camp: farmers and they'd rather have the extra income. We haven't had much to do with it at all. Prospecting I've never spent any money on.

Baum: Well, it sounds to me like you're a gambler all the time anyway. [Laughter]

Camp: Well, we took a little flyer on the desert, and it came in, but we didn't have any part there either; the oil company drilled it.

Financing for Long-Term Land Development

Baum: What kind of financing do you use if you want to develop land? A long-term investment.

Camp: That's a good question. There's plenty of money available for any worthwhile farmer who wishes to farm. If he has resources and reputation and wishes to buy more land and he doesn't have the money, there is no formula there, but all good men can get ample financing, either short-term or long-term, through the banks, including Bank of America, and many of the large national insurance companies. Or the federal land bank, I guess a lot of them use that. I don't.

I have never believed that any man who was worthy of it needed to suffer because of lack of financing. I say the same thing of young men who are just getting started. They lend on character now much more than they did forty years ago.

Baum: In your own operation, if you want to finance a big expense over a long term, how do you finance it?

Camp: If we don't have the money--you're not talking about twelve months?

Baum: No, not year to year. Developing a new piece of land, say.

Camp: There are several ways, and we don't confine ourselves to

Camp: one. One year one institution may have better terms than another one. We're pretty good friends with the Bank of America, and I can say nothing but good about them and their lending policy. When I can go and get anything I want and need for my annual operations just by signing a piece of paper, why, I'm pretty happy. But they are not going to do that unless they know we're going to work pretty hard. They are now into the long-term development, too. They weren't up until a few years ago. The insurance companies, on the other hand, have been in there a long time lending money.

Baum: Banks previously did year-to-year lending?

Camp: Much more. They had some money they lent on a farm, but they're now doing it more. There's too much competition from the insurance companies--or they studied and saw that it was a pretty good profit.

Baum: Do you borrow from the bank on annual operations?

Camp: Yes. Sometimes we make enough money to get along pretty well without the bank, but sometimes we don't, and if you expand your operations you're going to have to have more. We have no difficulty getting anything we want.

Baum: The oil mills lend money on an annual basis?

Camp: We don't use that kind of financing. I don't want any financing where I'm tied up with an operator like that. They've got you tied up. All the bank wants is for us to pay it back. I'm not particularly blaming the cotton gin or oil mill for doing that, because they've got to have volume to work with, I'm just saying that I prefer not to be restricted.

Responsibilities of the Ownership (July 10, 1963--afternoon session)

Baum: I wanted to ask you about your role as owner and manager of the farm, what you feel are your most important duties

Baum: as manager. What can you delegate to others and what must you do yourself?

Camp: Well, of course my sons are part of the management. What's the most important thing they've got to look out for?

Baum: Yes.

Camp: That's one I hadn't exactly thought of. The role of the manager in our organization is complete outlining of what we're going to grow and then how we're going to prepare the land to plant it, and every major operation from there on--the major operations.

The details to be filled in, we try to have folks with us who know how to do that, and those details are pretty much left to them. They're checked on, to see that it is being done. You can't plan everything that has to be done in the next six months; the planning has to be done from day to day, and that's done by management.

Mrs.

Camp: According to day-to-day procedures and how things happen.

Camp: That's right. The weather will change on us, it may rain, for instance, and the grapes have got to be sulphured an extra amount. Management will determine those things.

Likewise we may have a field of cotton getting along fine, no insects in it, somebody close by will cut a field of safflower or maybe alfalfa and the bugs will fly over here, and in a few hours' time we're in terrible shape. It's our job, through our insect people and so on, to be on the job there and know what's happening.

Baum: That seems a lower level decision than the top decision of what you're going to grow.

Camp: It is and it isn't. How to protect your crop is a very very difficult question and a very important one, because without protecting it you can destroy everything that's been done. That is where a lot of farming people haven't yet found themselves prepared, because they just think that Topsy grew and these crops will continue to grow. People who are not well versed in farming, today's farming, are out in the cold. Planning today on any crop in the San Joaquin Valley, the things we have to do are very different--we have to do many things we didn't do ten years ago.

Baum: How about duties such as belonging to these groups that you belong to? Such as when you pitched in to save the potatoes.

Camp: Well, that wasn't to help everybody else any more than it was to save my own neck. We were in trouble and we had to find out what it was and what we could do.

Baum: It seems to me that one of the duties of an owner is to work in community farmer organizations, and another is to take cognizance of legislation and try to influence it.

Camp: Well, I guess so. We let that be a part of our operations, we participate in those things, but we don't allow ourselves to lose our equilibrium in going overboard and devoting twenty-four hours a day to that kind of work. Some people do, and they have lost their farms because of that. Our community activity is fitted in as an essential part, a very definite part, of our farm operations. There are some civic duties beyond that.

Baum: Not farm organization work?

Camp: Well, yes. Those are my duties as a citizen, but the time has long passed when farmers should be considered just some muscle boys out there in the country. They are businessmen and citizens along with other people, and all of us should be a part of these things together. We're (farmers) becoming recognized as such very fast.

Baum: You mentioned you divide up your management duties with your sons. You've got three boys.

Camp: Yes. It isn't exactly divided and never will be. It's a matter of teamwork. One will have certain duties and certain ranches that he supervises overall, and another one some more, but there are duties every day that all of them have got to have their eyes on, consult one with the other.

Bill Jr. graduated from Clemson Agricultural College in South Carolina in agronomy, field crops. Don graduated in animal husbandry, but he's by no means confining his activities to animals. George has just finished, last January [1963], and he took horticulture. He's just getting into the work now. Don handles the cattle operations; in general, he supervises them in South Carolina, but he

Camp: doesn't spend much time back there. We have good men there, but it's under his general supervision.

Baum: Each one has certain ranches that he supervises, plus--

Camp: --additional duties. They never know from one day to another exactly how many are going to be piled on them, or which ones. You just have to play by ear.

Baum: You haven't really divided it up strictly, then.

Camp: No. No. We have several corporations and offices, but I couldn't tell you who is which because it makes no difference. We work as a team, as a whole team.

Baum: Do you have planning sessions? Like every Monday morning, or--

Camp: We try to, every Thursday afternoon. Don and Bill and I all belong to Rotary, and right after that we sit down for as long as it takes to discuss things. That may be changed. George is just now getting back into things, getting his feet wet.

Baum: Is George in Bakersfield too?

Camp: He's the one who lives out in the country, 'batching.' These other boys have been out of school a long time. Bill would have finished in 1944, but he went into the service and came back and finished in January '47, I believe. Don would have finished in '46, but the service interrupted and he finished in June '47. So the older two are pretty well seasoned.

Baum: Do you think you could handle this big operation if you didn't have sons?

Camp: I'd be theorizing if I were to say that, I don't know. I was handling what we had before they came, while they were in school and so on.

Mrs.

Camp: I think the answer would be yes. You would have different men.

Baum: Yes, would it be possible for you to hire men with the same duties, or is it necessary to have someone in your family, almost, to work with you?

- Camp: I don't know that it's necessary to have someone in the family, but it's a little safer, I feel, to have family members doing it. Others are doing it with hired people entirely. The Kern County Land Company is hired from top to bottom, none of them own very much stock.
- Baum: Do you think they can do as good a job as a family-managed farm?
- Camp: Well, we don't think so. We don't think they are doing as good as we are, by quite a bit, and where they do do a good job of raising a crop, we feel they're spending a great deal more per unit than we are. In fact, we know it.
- Baum: I'm just curious whether an operation, whether it's farming or some business, can really keep going efficiently without having sons to hand it on to.
- Mrs.
Camp: It depends on the personnel you have helping.
- Camp: I don't know. I'm tempted to chide you a bit about your use of the word business--farmers are businessmen too! The five years during the depth of the depression when I was with the Bank of America and had to acquire a lot of farms, I continued to operate them and leased some of them out, but at the end of the five years I had quite a nice overall profit accumulated from the overall operations. It was a heterogenous type of operation, several thousand ranches varying in size from twenty acres to twenty thousand acres, and many different crops. It kept us busy, we had some good superintendents and foremen.
- Baum: Well, if you don't have a family you wouldn't have the continuity of personnel.
- Camp: That I'm not in a position to answer, because we do have our family. We wouldn't be out working as hard as we are, if it weren't for the family and all the grandchildren coming along. It gives us a little bit of pride--not just to set something up for them, but as a family operation which we're kind of proud of.

I want to emphasize that I am not and have not been interested in this from the start as setting up something that the children or great-grandchildren can come along and have an easy life from. We're not interested in handing something down, not at all. If they can't make something better than what they found with their own skills

Camp: and knowledge, why, I want them to go into something else.

Baum: What characteristics do you think make for successful management of a farm?

Camp: First of all, they've got to have so-called religion as farmers. They've got to love the land, I don't care who it is, man or woman. He can't make a success farming unless he loves to see these things grow and wants to get out there and make 'em grow a little better. That is first all the time. If they think they can just turn it over to somebody and it'll go on, it just won't, that's all.

Baum: It has to be more than a commercial interest.

Camp: Much more, so far as I'm concerned. They can have a commercial interest, all right. You've got to have a commercial interest to the point of understanding business and wanting to do it in a manner that will make it pay for itself and improve. If they don't have that much business judgment, they won't stay in business long. Farming isn't what it was fifty years ago. Originally people who couldn't make a success anywhere else would go back into the country and get a little piece of land and make a living. You can't do that any more.

And you've got to first, last and always have your eye on what's happening out on the farm.

Baum: What sort of background have most of the successful farmers had? Is there any special background that seems better?

Camp: Most of them have a background of farming from the beginning, but that isn't necessarily always true. It doesn't always happen that way, but a fellow who goes in with no farming experience, no background, and makes good is the exception and not the rule.

Baum: Then most of them had a farm family. Have most of them had agricultural training?

Camp: Not necessarily in an agricultural college. You can trace them, and the ones who have, have a little less difficulty making their farm go. You've got to learn the scientific things one place or another, because you no longer farm unless you're a scientist in agricultural matters--insects,

Camp: diseases, weather, temperatures, what-have-you. The fellow who feels he can do it and buck nature and buck all the information, the things we've learned, is mistaken.

Baum: Is it necessary for the owner himself to know all this information?

Camp: It's better.

Legal Organization of Camp Farms

Baum: What do you call your central machinery organization?

Camp: Georgianna Farms Incorporated. We have W. B. Camp and Sons Incorporated, of which I am the majority owner. The gin is a corporation, by itself: Calolina Gins Company, Incorporated. Then our present operating company is W. B. Camp and Sons, not incorporated.

Baum: Is that a partnership?

Camp: It's a partnership made up of--well, we have family corporations. Bill, Jr., has his family corporation, Don has his family corporation, and we own, individually, properties, also incorporated. These family corporations lease their lands to the operating companies--whatever one owns is paid so much an acre rent. Income laws being what they are, the why of these things is up to our tax lawyer and CPA man. They are absolutely essential in an operation of this kind. They scrutinize every dollar of expense and income.

Baum: I'm sure the farm bookkeeping is tremendously difficult.

Camp: It's terrific, but we have to leave the why of them to our tax advisers.

Baum: Is this becoming more common, that the farmers have corporations?

Camp: I wouldn't say all, but it's becoming more and more common that farmers are incorporated. Farm magazines are

- Camp: advising it, and a lot of the tax lawyers advise it--not for the purpose of special advantage, but to keep one out of trouble. I don't pretend to be a lawyer nor a CPA, so I don't know all the detail of it. However, I do know I can sleep better when I know we are following expert advice.
- Baum: Are your South Carolina operations part of the same operation?
- Camp: Most are included under W. B. Camp and Sons, Incorporated. We have two or three different sets of books on that, and then we have one in Maine, but that's in connection with someone else.
- Baum: That's right, you do have partnerships with others too.
- Camp: Yes. Sometimes that's good and sometimes it's not so good, it depends on the other individual. As a regular thing and as for giving advice on it, I'd say don't do too much of it. We've been very fortunate in our associations.
- Baum: Do you usually do it as a partnership or as a corporation?
- Camp: It depends.

The Changing South

South Carolina Farms and Farmers

- Camp: In South Carolina, I first acquired my old homestead where I was raised, just a small place, and then we acquired some land around it. The Negro woman who brought me and my brothers and sisters into the world, she and her husband had a little farm next to us, but he died and she wanted to sell it, and she wouldn't sell it to anybody but me. So I bought it.
- Baum: Did your old farm go out of the family, or remain in the family?

Camp: It remained in the Camp family. Way back during the War between the States, when Sherman went through the South, it got out of the family for a little while then. That's ahead of my time. Finally my dad was able to buy a little piece of it back, and after several years--that's part of a different story.

Baum: It was around 1944 that you bought this adjoining property? I read that in an article...

Camp: I guess it was, if you read it somewhere, but I've forgotten the date. I bought some along about then; I bought one piece a little earlier than that, from the Negro woman. It must have been about 1940, '41.

Baum: Was your father still living then?

Camp: He lived until 1949. When he died he was ninety-nine years of age, or almost ninety-nine. He was still on the property where his father was born. We had restored the house to what it was 175 years ago; we have a manager living there now, he's a Clemson graduate. He's looking after our cattle. Camp's Crossroads is very much of a showplace right now, four miles out of the little town of Gaffney, South Carolina.

In addition to that, during the past twenty years I've acquired quite a number of other pieces of land close by, though some of it as far away as twenty miles but in the same county. The land we have in Cherokee County running cattle on now, built around my home place (we have several operations in South Carolina), there were twenty-odd families supported by this land when I was young, and now we have it operated by three families. That shows the change in agriculture. It was then little cotton patches, plus food crops for family use.

Baum: Why did you buy this land to begin with? Was it just sentimental value?

Camp: At first it was sentimental, maybe, and then I got to figuring, well, the South has got to go forward, and I fully believe that the economy of the South will increase faster than the economy anywhere else over the next fifty years. We're very happy with it.

Baum: I had a note that in 1952 you'd reclaimed three to four thousand acres of wornout cotton land and put it to pasture

Baum: and cattle. Is this the land in Cherokee County?

Camp: Yes. It may be a little more than that now. It's very fine cattle land, and if we were to sell it there'd be a nice profit. But agriculturally speaking we believe we are using the land to much better advantage than it ever has been before.

Baum: Are the neighbors there watching your operation and switching their land too?

Camp: A lot of them are doing similar things. These things go slowly, because people resist change, particularly in the old part of our country. But in another fifty years, the Southeast will be known as a cattle area in a big way.

Baum: These are beef cattle? What are your markets?

Camp: Yes. There are markets all around; they ship a lot of them to Baltimore, but a lot of industry is going in down there and in fifty years those states will be built up like the New England states.

Baum: Is it easier for you to find labor there for your farm operations than here?

Camp: No, not necessarily so. The labor that used to be out farming has gone into industry; it's changing very rapidly.

We have other farming operations in the extreme southern part of the state where it is cattle and timber-- Buckfield Plantation, near Yemassee, South Carolina. We've changed it radically. Fifty years ago it was rice fields, but the rice went to Louisiana, and California and Texas, because of mechanization, larger fields. Thousands of Negro and white families down there made their living growing rice, and overnight, so to speak, rice-growing was through^h in South Carolina. I came to California because of that; I was asked when I got out of school (Clemson) if I would go down to the rice fields and see if I could find out what other crops would grow there, experimenting. From there I was shipped out here. That happened some years before, too, when that country was growing indigo.

Baum: I read that Buckfield Plantation had been growing flower bulbs.

Camp: Yes. For Old Man Kress's ten-cent store. He lived there and died there, and on these rice fields he grew the bulbs they sold in the ten-cent store.

Baum: Was that a reasonable thing to grow there?

Camp: I couldn't tell you. He had died and that had stopped before we bought it. I'm reasonably sure it would not have been economical--it was a hobby of his and whether it paid or not I don't know. But there weren't many federal taxes then so he had plenty of money to play with. It's a different story today.

Baum: You bought it from Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Frame. Is that his daughter?

Camp: Yes. They had been running a little cattle on it, that's all.

Baum: Was that just a hobby with them?

Camp: I don't know that I could answer that, but she needed some money and that's why it was sold. She's still living in Savannah; they're not together.

Baum: Is there a house on that property?

Camp: Oh yes, there were sixteen houses, one big one where he lived. We have a cook there, and when we go down there we stay in that house. We don't go very often in summer-time, it's pretty hot and sticky. We have a lot of timber growing there, and quite a few cattle.

Baum: You've switched it over to timber?

Camp: No, timber was already started and we're just letting it grow. It grows quite fast.

Baum: This is pine?

Camp: Mostly pine. Timber is quite a crop in the southern states today. Fifty years ago, except for lumber a pine tree was nothing, but now for pulpwood, making paper, it's quite an industry. A lot of farms are going completely into timber.

Baum: Timber has to be a large operation, doesn't it?

Camp: Well, when you say large, relatively. A farmer down there with two or three hundred acres of land and a

Camp: hundred of it in timber, after it gets going he can cut out enough each year, what they call selective cutting, to sell for a nice little sum of money. However, this type of operation would have to still be classed as subsistence farming.

Baum: He'd have some acres to raise his own food on anyway.

Camp: Yes, he could, but this has pretty much gone. Not even those families, both Negro and white, who used to, that was all they had. Now they'd rather work a few days somewhere and go and buy their groceries. Farming in the Southeast is no longer what it was thirty years ago. The small farms are either folding up, putting the entire holding into trees, or they're selling out to adjoining neighbor farmers who are expanding so they can mechanize. But cotton on the better land in South Carolina will continue to compete as long as cotton is grown in the United States.

Baum: You bought this land with Carl A. Melcher? And Frank Jeppi.

Camp: That's right. Melcher died in 1954 and I haven't had much interest in the place since.

Baum: He was manager of the Kern County Land Company?

Camp: That's right. But this was a private venture. He was an Iowa man and a very close friend of mine. I was going to buy it and these two men happened to be with me the day I saw it, and they asked to be admitted as partners. We were very happy about it, that is, Melcher and I felt it was a good investment. I would have been better to have bought it alone, but Melcher was my closest friend and a grand gentleman.

Baum: Is Jeppi still living?

Camp: Yes.

Baum: And you still operate it as a partnership.

Camp: Yes. When I say better what I really mean is, when you're doing all the managing and thinking and so on, and then you divvy up with somebody else who isn't a close friend, and who's not spending anything, you have to take all the

Camp: heartaches and headaches and so on. I merely say that in passing, that that's one of the things a fellow should think well and long about before becoming partners. If you become a partner with somebody and he's going to take it over and manage it, why, you've done a good job for yourself, provided he's a good operator. That's wonderful. But if you've got to suffer all the headaches and so on, then why divvy up? Unless there's a great deal of money which has to be put into it, and then you need the capital. But this wasn't for that purpose.

Baum: I guess one of the troubles with partnerships is that the two partners both try to run it.

Camp: It can't be. We haven't had that trouble.

Baum: Jeppi was a South Carolinian, is that right?

Camp: No, he's a Sicilian, and he spent a few years in South Carolina before coming on to California. He knew some people back there, that's all. He came as an immigrant when he was twelve years old.

Baum: Did he get his education in South Carolina?

Camp: I guess he didn't go to school much. His name was Gypsy. He and a couple of his brothers came over; he changed his name, they didn't. He spends a good part of his time in Sicily now. Oh yes, he's a Sicilian. [Laughing]

Baum: Is he a partner with you in something else?

Camp: No, he was, but not now. He lives in Bakersfield when he's not in Sicily. He's not in farming, he was never a farmer. He has some farm land left, but he was in the merchandising business, cotton buying and selling and so on. He had some other partners who were very good for him too.

Baum: I wondered if you could compare farming in South Carolina with farming in the San Joaquin Valley?

Camp: It's quite different. Good farmers back there are making out just as well as good farmers out here, I think. I would say in general, however, that if one is willing to allow his blood pressure to run up and down, take the chances, it's easier to make money faster, and also lose it faster, out here than it is back there. It takes more

Camp: money to farm, with irrigation, and the land is very high priced here as against there. Relative land here for a thousand dollars an acre would be back there \$250 or \$300 an acre.

Baum: It costs more money; how can you make more money?

Camp: [Laughing] Well, you've got to make pretty good crops, and quality.

Mrs.

Camp: Volume. There's a greater yield of quality products here.

Camp: Yes. You have to make--I coined a phrase when I first came out here--"quantity of quality products on the same acreage." That's what we've got to do. We have to keep that in mind every day, those two things.

Baum: In South Carolina do you have the same degree of farmers getting together to work on a problem co-operatively?

Camp: More so. When I say more so, I'll have to back up a little. They get together more. When it comes to somebody getting something done, driving through and getting some money to do it with and so on, it takes them longer to do that. They have the desire to co-operate. Out here we don't get together enough until there's something desperate.

Oh, I'm exaggerating a little. We ought to have got together this year, I guess, and raised the price of potatoes, but nobody attempted it. Actually they couldn't, I'm just being facetious, there were just too many potatoes, in packages all over America and in the fields.

Baum: How do the farmers there accept scientific agriculture? Do they latch onto new methods like they do here in California?

Camp: They're starting to now. Last week I got a call from a leader in one community where I made a speech last October, the 29th; he wanted to know what we're using to kill red spiders on cotton. Well, that's a little extreme, but he was getting all the information he could back there and it didn't seem to be working out properly. He had been out here two years ago, he came out with the governor and a hundred others, and he wanted to know, first-hand, what we were using. Not that we had the answer necessarily, but he knows that California has a lot of cotton, so we told him and I hope it did some good. But to make a success today agriculture everywhere has got to be scientific.

Baum: Claude Hutchison always seemed to feel that California farmers were better educated and quicker to move into whatever had to be done than other farmers.

Camp: That's true, and the reason for that is simple: California agriculture is newer, younger, the people who came here were venturesome, and you've got to spend a lot of money whichever way you do it, so farmers out here have been willing to do it. All over America the tendency is to resist change. We didn't have anything to change from, you see.

But they're going to do it back there. I'm foolish enough to believe that the trip of a hundred of them with the governor and the Clemson College president, the bankers and others, two years ago, did a lot of good. The year before that there were 267 of them came from North Carolina, some from South Carolina, came out and spent two or three days with us.

Baum: You organized the trip for them to come out and tour California agriculture?

Camp: We didn't, though we helped in this state, but friends of ours back there had done that. These two trips were engineered by Wachovia Bank and Trust Company. The chairman of the board is a close friend of ours, and his agricultural staff are close friends of ours; he organized it. Every year he takes a group of a hundred or so somewhere, and he's come here twice. This year, maybe they're returning this week, they went to Europe to study the Common Market.

Baum: Well, that sounds pretty go-getting.

Camp: Oh yes. And they have a development association within the state and already this same man in North Carolina has had us to speak three times to his group, stirring up trouble, if you want to call it trouble. Stirring the pot, anyway. This is Archie Davis, one of the brightest young men in America, and this coming year I predict he will be president of the American Bankers Association. I nominated him for director of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and he sits with me now on the board there. He's a brilliant young man--chairman of the board, not just president of the bank.

Baum: What's the name of the bank?

Camp: [To Mrs. Camp] You spell it, sweetheart. She was born over there.

Mrs.

Camp: W-a-c-h-o-v-i-a. It was founded by Moravians.

Camp: The president of Moravian College in Winston-Salem was sitting talking to us one day. I was there as chairman of the agricultural committee of the Chamber of Commerce of the U.S., and the last day we were there Moravian College gave us a dinner and he was telling about the Easter music and service. He said, "Every Easter we have an outstanding soloist."

I laughed and said to him, "Well, this little girl sitting next to you was the soloist before you were president of the college, some years ago." [Laughing] Louise was the soloist.

But people are waking up, in both North Carolina and South Carolina, and when they get on fire these other states in the South are going to do the same thing.

Mission to Bring Supplemental Irrigation to the Southeast

Baum: You've been working on the problem of short drought--.

Camp: Supplemental irrigation, you mean? Yes. If you want to ask me what my hobby is, that could be termed a hobby. It isn't, it's a crusade, a burning desire of mine, to avoid those recurring droughts every year that almost every community has in the East.

As a youngster I would be plowing in our bottom land in my shirttail, barefooted, dust flying everywhere, and here was the water running right by in the creek, and we could have pumped it if we'd known how, if anybody'd told us, and mostly we could have made a good crop. I've been begging, begging, begging the colleges for years to put on a crusade, and they agreed they would but didn't, until we put up the money to buy the equipment, hire the engineers and train them to put on demonstrations all over the state, showing what irrigation would do. When

Camp: needed--not just promiscuously irrigated, but when there was a drought or they said a crop needed water, these fellows in charge of demonstrating irrigation would skedaddle over and irrigate it.

Baum: I have a note that in 1944 you offered to pay the salaries of two engineers to demonstrate supplemental irrigation and no one was interested.

Camp: Shortly after that we brought a bunch of twenty-five from Clemson out here to the West to spend several days with us, looking at irrigated crops, pastures and cattle and so on, and when they got back to South Carolina--the dean was with them--the dean was fired and they put on a younger man who said maybe we could do something with irrigation.

Baum: I don't understand--the dean didn't favor your plan?

Camp: Not any of them favored it, except the president of the college and one or two others. The head of one of the departments said if we have to irrigate in South Carolina to make a crop we'll quit growing crops. Just as simple as that.

Baum: They just looked at the rainfall chart and decided that was enough?

Camp: That's right. Anyhow, that has changed. Some of them still resist change, it does cost a little money to buy this equipment.

Baum: Sprinkler systems?

Camp: Yes. It does cost money to make irrigation ponds and get the water and so on. It costs us a lot of money to drill wells too, a whole lot more.

We put a cash fund up at Clemson called "Camp Irrigation Fund" for them to do this with, and I selected a committee to see that it was done. I didn't leave it to the college, because the professors just wouldn't do it. One of the members of the committee was president of the Farm Bureau of South Carolina, Agnew, E.A. Agnew.

Baum: I see you had S.C. Stribling as county agent.

Camp: At the time he was put on that committee he was the editor

Camp: of the experiment station and the College of Agriculture bulletins and papers and so on. We've got one out here, Schacht.

Baum: Henry Schacht. I listen to him on the radio.

Camp: He's a close friend of ours. I'm very fond of him, he's a good boy.

Baum: They think very highly of him in the College of Agriculture.

Camp: He's the best they've ever had, and they've had a lot of good ones. There's no baloney about him, he gets you the facts.

Baum: I see Jim Eleazer's name here.

Camp: He was a free-lance writer; he had been a county agent and a classmate of mine. All three of those fellows were classmates of mine, and all three of them belonged to the Humdingers Club with me. [Laughing]

I was ready to roll and if anybody got in our way there was hell a-popping. This is how irrigation got started in the Southeast. I made the first speech down in Baton Rouge February 1, 1949. I'd been preaching it before, but the first real speech before all the states--there were two thousand of them there--was in Baton Rouge. They thought I was crazy, talking about irrigation. ("Changing Agriculture and Irrigation Opportunities in the Southeast," before the Association of Southern Agricultural Workers, meaning agricultural college and experiment station workers--also teachers.)*

Baum: Do some of them still think that?

Camp: The dean of Louisiana University took me to lunch that day when I finished talking, he and four or five others, and he said, "Do you mean what you said, Bill?" His question will tell you what he was thinking. But they're very strong for it now.

Baum: That's the people in the agricultural colleges. How about the farmers?

* Copies of Mr. Camp's speeches are deposited in The Bancroft Library.

Mrs.

Camp: They're all going for it now.

Camp: I wouldn't say all yet, honey. They all realize--the idea we've got across. I had to fight the United States Department of Agriculture the same way--I think I told you that before. I had quite a bitter battle with them; they pooh-poohed the idea completely.

Baum: For the Southeast?

Camp: For anywhere in the East. They call it the humid area.

So in '52, I believe, there was an article somewhere showing sprinklers going; somebody had written something about our work--I believe it was Frank Taylor. They saw it and the Secretary of Agriculture called me and wanted to know if I could meet with him in Washington and talk about it, and I said, "I can't this week, I'm going to Maine."

He says, "All right, we'll set up a meeting to suit you." So they did, and he called in seventy people from the different departments and the staff and all day long we were at it.

He said, "This is the first meeting, fellows, that we've (meaning the U.S.D.A.) ever held officially to discuss irrigation in the humid area."

I'd been giving them the dickens before that. So they appointed a committee and I saw all these fellows; I'd known some of them before, worked with them, I knew their ideas. They pooh-poohed the idea; they set up a committee and put certain people on it, and I said, "Mr. Secretary--."

Baum: Who was the secretary then?

Camp: Brannan. The fellow assigned to preside at the all-day meeting was the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture--I've forgotten his name, but he was from Tennessee. I got him to go down to South Carolina the following week and make a speech; the people wanted me to come down and make a speech on irrigation and I couldn't go, so I asked him to go down.

Anyhow, I said, "Mr. Secretary, I hope this won't be just another committee, dragging its feet and doing nothing."

Camp: Well, that's precisely what they did.

We went ahead and continued. Their soil conservation people thought it was crazy--they didn't say it out loud, but to themselves they did.

I was called by the conservation supervisors to make a speech at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and they came in from several states (it was their annual meeting). They had put out a postage stamp, "Soil Conservation," and they were proud of it. They didn't have the word "water" on it, and I said, "Fellows, you're just as crazy as you can be. What good is soil conservation without water? If you don't get busy conserving water so we can protect these farmers during droughts, why, you're just not doing the job."

This sounds ego, again, but it was this needling all the time that caused them to get into it.

Now they have written a bulletin saying that the most value to be obtained from irrigation in America is in the rainfall belt. That's an official bulletin.

Baum: When did you start this crusade?

Camp: Oh, I started it in a small way, needling them a little, way back in the late thirties and early forties.

Baum: How did you get so concerned about this particular aspect?

Camp: Well, I was farming here, and the more you farm and irrigate the crops you're growing the more you realize that you're competing with somebody else's crops. I do have an awful lot of kinfolks, and I got to wondering why they didn't do this. My own experience has been that every year we had a drought, and a little water would have made us a crop, a little money. As it was, we never had any. It's just a matter of thinking it through, Mrs. Baum.

I don't want to create the idea that everybody in that part of the world is ready to take up irrigation. They would like to, but they aren't ready yet, either mentally or financially. But fortunately they are in the mood, they are coming around.

Baum: It's considered a good idea in official circles.

Camp: That's right. It wasn't accepted in official circles until they had to fire and re-fire and finally get some new blood into the colleges of agriculture, both presidents and deans of the colleges of agriculture, who believed in such things. They had to get rid of the others.

These trips out here have had marvelous effects, and not just those trips but hundreds and hundreds of people in their private automobiles driving out here and visiting with friends. One of the things they want to do most of all is get out in the country and take a look-see. There's nothing more convincing than that.

All the winners in the cotton-growing contests for the past many years have been on farms where the fellows irrigated, and that gets publicized. Two brothers and their father in Mississippi, on the red lands, have been the corn winners in America for the last eleven years now, every year, and every year they've irrigated. That has its effect. 215 bushels, I believe, was the top.

Mrs.

Camp: No, it was 310.

Camp: Well, the average in America is about forty-five. In Iowa and Illinois it's fifty and sixty bushels.

Baum: Have you raised corn anywhere?

Camp: Oh yes. In South Carolina. We don't now back there, but we've raised corn in Kern County and we got 125 bushels to the acre. But we found it takes 125 bushels to the acre in Kern County at this time to break even. [Laughing] We didn't lose money, we were just on the breaking line and there wasn't much leeway there.

Baum: Soybeans is one of your South Carolina crops?

Camp: Yes. When we get around to soybeans and peaches, we'll talk about Mrs. Camp's operations, because she has those two crops, we don't. But it's a South Carolina crop in a big way and it's growing bigger all the time. South Carolina and all the southern states are going to be a great big competitor of the Middle West in soybeans. In California there is no soybean variety yet that has been perfected that will mature and hold its beans--make it profitable for us to grow them. We can grow a big vine but we never have yet--we're hopeful, that's all I can say.

Baum: You can't grow oranges in South Carolina, can you?

Camp: No. We have a little land in Florida that someday we might want to put some oranges on.

W. B. CAMP - FAMILY MAN
(July 11, 1963, interview)

Marriage and Family

Wife - Georgia Ann App Camp

Baum: Well, I wonder if we could get in some biographical information, Mr. Camp. I think we've got you biographically up to California, but we didn't go on with your family.

Mrs.

Camp: They've got you to California after you graduated from college.

Baum: When you first came out you were a bachelor and you spent all your time looking at cotton. Right?

Camp: I wasn't a confirmed bachelor, I was a busy boy, that's all. I was working night and day, I had no time to think of anything but work. I had lots of fun, lots of friends, but only as I worked. It was a terrific job.

Mrs.

Camp: He went to square dances during all those years he was looking at cotton, and he met his wife there.

Camp: Oh, at a barn dance, yes.

Baum: What was her maiden name?

Camp: Georgia App.

Baum: Where was she from?

Camp: Bakersfield, originally Pennsylvania but came out as a young girl to the oil fields. Her family were oil people, not related to farming at all. They lived out in the oil fields in the desert.

Mrs.

Camp: Her father was in charge of production for one of the oil

Mrs.

Camp: companies.

Camp: So she went to school. Her brother finished high school but didn't go to college, but he took work in correspondence school and became vice-president in charge of production for one of the major oil companies. She went to Bakersfield High School and Bakersfield Junior College. I guess she was in the first class of Bakersfield Junior College that Grace Bird organized. I believe it was the first junior college in the state. Grace Bird and Georgia App were each other's best friends, they were as close as peas in a pod.

Baum: And she was interested in music?

Camp: No, she wasn't, she was just an all-around good student.

Baum: I know you donated an organ to Bakersfield Junior College in her memory, and I wondered if she was an organist.

Camp: No, after she had passed away Grace Bird (president of Bakersfield College) called one day and said that the trustees had met and felt they wanted to honor two students, one girl and one boy, and they had selected Georgia as the outstanding graduate and wondered what would be an appropriate memorial, and they had thought of a pipe organ. The trustees had talked to the alumni and they were sure the alumni would pay for it, or for half of it if we wanted to pay for half of it. Anyway, they wanted to go ahead and do it, and I said, "We might be interested. I'll talk to the boys."

So when I talked to the boys, they said they'd be interested but not in going on a partial basis, it wouldn't be fair, so we said we'd give it all. They selected the organ and all; all we did was pay for it. But I presume Grace Bird initiated the whole thing.

Shortly after I persuaded Louise to come to California. It took them two years to build the organ, and at the dedication services, several folks said some nice things, and we asked Bill, Jr. to say it for us, and the one request we made, the one restriction, you might say, was that we asked that it never be used by anyone who was propagandizing for communism or other subversive acts against America. We thought that wasn't an unreasonable request to make. Records were made of that on tape.

So shortly after I persuaded Louise to come out to California I came in the house one day and her (our) two daughters and son, George, were sitting on the floor in the



W.B. Camp, son Donald M. Camp and Mrs. Georgia App Camp. 1942.



Camp home and office, 1937, constructed from five insulated box cars. This original home, with some additions, is now lived in by W.B. Camp, Jr.



W.B. Camp and sons W.B. Camp, Jr., and Donald M. Camp at dedication of Georgia Camp Memorial Organ, Bakersfield High School. Georgia App Camp was chosen by school officials and trustees as the most outstanding girl graduate up to that time.

Camp: music room listening to these records, the whole performance where Georgia was honored. When they got through that they put on some additional records, and I sat through that; those were recordings of ceremonies back at Limestone College in South Carolina where that institution had honored Louise as the outstanding graduate. I wondered how lucky I could be.

Baum: You were married in 1921?

Camp: Yes.

Baum: You were living on the experiment station?

Camp: No, there was no station. I met my wife in 1921 at a barn dance, as Louise said. Barn dances then were a little more respectable than I look upon barn dances today. It was a small community and all the people were there.

Baum: Under what auspices were these held?

Camp: A sorority, I believe that one was, pretty much the high school and junior college group. It was a school dance.

Following her graduation she came on to Berkeley and the University of California.

We went out to the country on December the 13th, 1921, and I took some pictures of my wife-to-be standing in the pasture, and the next day we were married, and the following day I had to go to Washington so we went back East. On the 15th mule teams started leveling the land for the experiment station. That was the beginning of the station, and when we got back considerable work had been done and we started building our house.

Our two boys were born there, Bill and Don. Bill, Jr. was born, I believe, September third, 1923. Don was born July 29, 1925.

Family Life

Baum: What did your family like to do for fun?

Camp: Oh, we went camping whenever we had a chance, to the mountains or over to the beach. But there were no coolers in the homes then and it was very hot, and you'd have to get out of the valley part of the time. We'd go up to the mountains or off to Pismo Beach.

Baum: So you'd get away for a month or so?

Camp: Not a month or so, but a few weeks, the family only. I made it weekends. And every winter I had to go to Washington to make a report, and usually took them with me to South Carolina and they'd stop off there with my people. They became good friends of all the seven brothers and sisters I had, and I'm sure that Georgia was accepted as just another member of the family, even though she was from Pennsylvania. She became as much a southern girl as any girl ever born in the South.

Baum: Did you have much time to spend with your family?

Camp: Oh, down at the station I was there two-thirds or three-fourths of the time, but I'd have to travel around the state a lot, supervising cotton experiments and advising cotton growers, and I'd have to spend some nights away from home. But we were a very close family, we enjoyed being together.

Baum: Where did your boys go to school?

Camp: They went to Shafter Grammar School, and then--no, we moved when I went with the Bank of Italy in November, 1928, and we went to Fresno, so they went to the Fresno schools. We lived out in the country near Fresno.

From there we had to go to Washington, in between we were near Los Angeles, in one of the suburbs part of 1933 when the Triple A started and we were getting things organized. Then I went on back to Washington for a few years, and then when I decided to go back into farming they went to Bakersfield High School and then to Clemson Agricultural College, both of them.

Sons Go to Clemson College

Baum: Did they want to go back to Clemson, or--?

Camp: As I said, I had to go to Washington every year and then I had to live there for a year or two, and we had been by Clemson a few times, visiting. When Bill announced he would like to go to Clemson, with no reservations, we were quite surprised. We had not urged him to go and hadn't expected him to go. Then two years later Don came along and debated between Texas A & M and Clemson, and finally decided on Clemson. He was cattle-minded and he was interested in Texas cattle--the romance of it, I guess.

All the way through we had a feeling, and I still have the same philosophy, that we let our children do as much thinking for themselves, deciding for themselves, as possible, after they have advised with us and talked with us. We let them know at all times that we had complete confidence in them that they were going to do right, that they were not going to go wild. We never had any such thoughts at all. I feel that it paid off.

In-Laws and Grandchildren

Baum: Who did your boys marry? Bakersfield girls?

Camp: It's a unique thing; it wasn't planned that way, but Bill-- a schoolmate of mine who'd come to Arizona had a little daughter and while Bill was at Clemson he had stopped off in Arizona a time or two going and coming and visited her, and about the time he was ready to finish school he announced that he wanted to marry this little girl, and he did. They have four boys.

While at Clemson Don met a lot of people, I guess, but two girls from an adjoining girls' school came to Clemson to some of the parties, and one girl introduced him to her roommate, and she turned out to be the daughter of a classmate of mine, Agnew, and Don married her. The girl who introduced him was Jean Crouch, who later married Governor Strom Thurmond, now Senator Strom Thurmond.

Baum: That makes her quite a bit younger than Senator Thurmond.

Mrs.

Camp: Yes, she was about twenty-five years younger. They were very

Mrs.

Camp: happy.

Camp: She made a very good wife, both as a governor's wife and as a senator's wife. She died two or three years ago of a brain tumor.

Don and Izetta have two girls and three boys. They're very happily married.

And that's not the end of it. Now that Louise and her (our) two daughters and son are here, the son has gone back to Clemson. George has graduated there, and Addie Louise, who graduated from the University of South Carolina, is now married to a Clemson graduate, farming in South Carolina. His father was at Clemson when I was there, and his brother graduated from Clemson. Just happened so. Addie Louise has a young son who is already enrolled for Clemson eighteen years from now.

Baum: [Laughing] So a school reunion is a family reunion too.

Camp: That's right. The late president of Clemson was one of my classmates and one of my closest friends, and the present president is also a Clemson man and a friend of ours.

Baum: Your first wife died in 1943?

Camp: Yes, from penumonia--only five days' illness.

Travel in South America and Europe

Baum: You did some traveling in the years you were a widower, didn't you?

Camp: Yes, I did an awful lot of traveling back and forth across the United States on agricultural committees to Washington. I might say incidentally that it was at my own expense. I was offered many things to become affiliated with the government, but I'd rather do this--I'd rather come as committeeman at my own expense so I can say what I please.

Baum: In those years you went to South America and Europe too?

Camp: Yes. I had never wanted to do any traveling across the ocean particularly. For some reason I just had no hankering to do it, but I decided that I'd better, because changes are going on all over the world and I decided I'd better know a little about agriculture in other countries.

So in 1949 Hugh Jewett and I went to South America together to study agriculture. In Brazil I was fortunate to meet the family that is known as the coffee kings of the world--Lunardelli by name, a man with six sons and one daughter. The father died last year but the six sons are carrying on. Pedro was the one I knew best. They took me in their plane all over Brazil, visiting their coffee and cotton plantations and cattle. Shortly after that two of the families came up here and visited with us, and we've been in connection with them several times since. Many times.

Baum: Do they speak English?

Camp: Yes. Not too well.

Baum: I presume you don't speak Portuguese?

Camp: Only "shuva," meaning "rain." [Laughing] But I got to where I could speak a little and understand it, and I understand a little Spanish. In the Argentine it's Spanish, of course. It was a very profitable trip. A lot of my friends in America, Anderson-Clayton, for instance, have lots of operations down there, and their people were with me a lot of the time.

Then a few years later, in 1953, I was chairman of the agricultural committee of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and I decided I ought to know something about European agriculture, so I went over and got a car and a driver and spent several months, studying agriculture all over Europe. It wasn't a pleasure trip but I got pleasure out of it, and I met an awful lot of fine people.

Baum: You didn't take your boys along?

Camp: No, they were farming. The time will come for them to go. Later, in 1957, Louise and I went to Europe and spent several months. I was studying agriculture then too.

Second Marriage to Louise Phifer Wise Camp, 1956

Baum: How did you meet Louise?

Camp: Louise is the oldest of nine Phifer children. She was born in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, but raised in Sumter, South Carolina. Louise attended Limestone College in my home town (Gaffney) in South Carolina. She sang her way through Limestone, as I worked my way through Clemson. They sent her everywhere, all over the South, singing, representing the school. After graduation she taught school in Gaffney and met a lot of my people, and then she went on to New York for further study in music and was ready to enter the Metropolitan as a singer. At this point Louise had to make the great choice--a singing career in the big lights or marry George W. Wise, a South Carolina farmer and banker--home and family. From grammar school Louise had participated in many singing and music contests. She won all. Even so, I thank the good Lord for guiding her into marriage at this point. She married and went into farming and banking in Trenton, South Carolina.

Subsequently, shortly after my wife passed away, her husband passed away and she took over the total business down there and became--I started to say a notorious farmer in her own name, a very well-known farmer, and was talked about and written about quite a lot. I also became known back there, and her friends were my friends, so it was just one of those things that we got to know each other.

Mrs.

Camp: Bill had become nationally known in farming circles; I wasn't, but I was pretty well known in some areas in the Southeast.

Baum: But you had known each other before you left South Carolina?

Camp: Slightly. Entirely casually.

Baum: You were married in 1956, is that right?

Camp: Yes, January, 1956. Two things happened in '56 in addition to that. Twenty minutes before we were married--we were married in her home in Trenton, South Carolina--came a telephone call from the World Bank in Washington to me, asking if I could be in Washington immediately--the next day. I didn't know these people, and I said, "I'll be there probably in about ten days." I didn't know what they wanted.



Mr. and Mrs. W.B. Camp in their home, Bakersfield, California. Mrs. Camp is widely recognized for her knowledge and appreciation of authentic antiques.



Mr. and Mrs. Wofford B. Camp home, 701 Oleander Ave. Bakersfield, California. 1965.



Wofford B. Camp and Mrs. Camp (Louise Phifer Camp)

Camp: In about ten days we were in Washington--I had to be there for a board meeting--so we called them and they said, "All right, can you come over?" We went over about ten o'clock and talked to some of the people. Lunchtime came and they had a big banquet there for several people; following that we did some more talking. They wanted us to go, they wanted me to be in charge of all agriculture in Iran, and they had already set aside \$500,000,000 for me to spend if I'd go for agriculture in Iran, for irrigation and anything they needed. They said there were several hundred people over there on the payroll as my employees.

I listened a little more and asked how come they'd picked me, but anyway I said, "I'm not sympathetic to some of the things that you've outlined that you'd maybe want me to do, and I'm not your man."

They wanted me to help them find somebody, and I said what could I tell him you'd pay him and so on?

They said, "Well, for you, you could write your own ticket. For him, why, we'd have to talk to him."

But I said, "Well, if I recommended a man he would have the same ideas I have, he would be of my own thinking and he wouldn't be willing to do some of these things either."

Anyway, we had an opportunity to go to Iran on our honeymoon, but...

That same year, in fact, just before we were married, the nominating committee for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce had tried to get me to say I'd become president and they didn't know what was coming up in early January, that I was going to get married and that I'd have a new family, three more children, so I had to decline. I would have enjoyed going to Iran maybe as a visit, six months or a year, but not when I had three new children. Being president of the Chamber takes all your time for twelve months and I would not desert my new family. But it was unique that it all happened in the same year.

Baum: What did you do about your farm in South Carolina, Mrs. Camp?
Mrs.

Camp: I still have it. It's still being farmed, operated by a foreman-manager.

Baum: What do you raise there?

Mrs.

Camp: Peaches, cotton, small grains, cattle, soybeans, some corn.

Baum: How much time do you spend in South Carolina?

Camp: Not a great deal. We're back there several times during the year, but we don't spend a lot of time, we just look it over. Less than a month, total, but we are there every six or eight weeks, to take a look-see. We usually do it in connection with some other work, when we go to Washington for meetings and to Maine. Then Mrs. Camp is trustee of her college and I'm connected with Clemson and we have to go to meetings there.

Baum: Mrs. Camp, you said one of your daughters is a farmer's wife, and your son is a farmer now.

Mrs.

Camp: He is a rancher, just getting his feet wet, and the other daughter is continuing her postgraduate studies in biological sciences. She's a graduate of Cal Poly.

Camp: She went her first year to South Carolina, because her older sister was already enrolled there--in fact she was a senior.

Mrs.

Camp: She transferred to the University of California, and because of a knee injury had to have an operation and lost a semester; so as not to lose an entire semester she transferred to Cal Poly for a quarter and liked it so well she remained there. She's very interested in chemistry and the sciences and has studied a good deal about the soil. One can never tell just where she'll wind up, really.

Camp: (Added September 1968. Sarah graduated from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, in June 1963. Apparently the school as a whole was very much to Sarah's liking and she enjoyed every professor and every class that she took. She insists that the whole social atmosphere or climate, or whatever one wishes to call it, was exactly right to stimulate her desire for still more information. So, from Cal Poly she went to Kaiser Memorial Hospital in San Francisco for two years of intensive study and experience in hospital and particularly hospital laboratory work. Today she is in charge of the Nuclear Medical Laboratory at Merritt Hospital, Oakland. Here they do a lot of open heart surgery along with all other related matters and the fact that the total responsibility for laboratory tests is given to her shows that Cal Poly instilled in her some very fine basic principles.

We can see that it is difficult for her to turn loose

Camp: this work but her Stanford alumnus husband says that he hopes she will leave this so as to turn her entire attention to home and family. W. B. Camp)

Social, Religious, and Fraternal Affiliations

Baum: I wanted to ask you what your hobbies are--you told me one of them was the salvation of the South through irrigation. What do you do that's just a little lighter?

Mrs.

Camp: The same thing all over again.

Camp: I have been interested in farm people and the improvement of agriculture and the improvement of the image of agricultural people in America. We've been connected with lots of activities that have definitely been working to that end. My association with Associated Farmers years ago... I'll wait till we get to that. I enjoy going out to the ocean, I love it, and the mountains too, but this little wife of mine has got me--well, we try to go to the Smoky Mountains twice a year, in spring when all the rhododendrons and azaleas are in bloom and again in the middle of October. My hobby, first, last and all the time, is visiting in those areas and visiting with the people who have grown up and lived there. We come away with a great inspiration given to us by these people, who many of them have never been to school but have a philosophy that is marvelous.

Baum: What church do you belong to?

Camp: At heart I'm a country Baptist. I was baptized in the Goforth River just outside of Grassypond Church in Cherokee County; we had to let down the wire fence in order to get into it, and there was quite a group of us young folks baptized at the same time. It was just a one-room country church, at that time. Now they have a very fine modern church with ample facilities for all activities.

I was a Baptist a long time until a few years ago, after my wife passed away. She was an Episcopalian. I went with her to church, but for some reason I could never bring myself to join it, only, I guess, because I was so tied to these people

Camp: back yonder. They needed my membership and I guess I needed them, and my wife understood it and didn't blame me.

But after she passed away I didn't like the new preacher and I went to the Baptist church, and I didn't get any inspiration in this church in Bakersfield so I went to the Presbyterian church to hear Dr. Glenn Puder, who is a marvelous man and would inspire anyone who has any conscience at all, I think. Then when Louise came out to California, she had also been raised as a Baptist, but when she married she went into a Presbyterian community--the Presbyterian church was in her yard--so she and her children became Presbyterians. Maybe I shouldn't say this, but if Glenn Puder ceases to be the minister of that church I will revert back to membership in my country Baptist church in South Carolina, because I still love those people and feel that we need each other.

Baum: What fraternal groups do you belong to?

Camp: I'm a Mason. I don't have time to spend a lot of time at it, and I regret it because I think a lot of the organization. But I'm just a member and that's about all.

Baum: You mentioned that you and your boys are Rotarians.

Camp: Yes, I was a Rotarian in Bakersfield. Then one of the boys was asked to join Rotary by Mr. Melcher, and I've forgotten who sponsored Don to join. But I wasn't responsible. I guess I'm the only dad who has two sons in the Bakersfield Rotary Club.

Baum: Do you belong to any other social groups?

Mrs.

Camp: You're an honorary member of the Hibernian Society in Charleston.

Camp: [Laughing] Not very active. I belong to an honorary fraternity or two; Phi Beta Phi voted me an honorary member at Clemson, and I'm also an honorary member of the Blue Key Society. At Clemson each year the outstanding Blue Key man is given a Paul Revere silver bowl by us. We set up a fund at Clemson to take care of this.

Mrs.

Camp: For scholastic and leadership record.

Baum: I keep reading about your flowers in the paper.

Camp: I don't know whether that's a hobby or not, but since Louise came along I've been able to get her to do all the hard work

Camp: in the yard, and we do have a lot of flowers. I feel that any man who can't be thrilled by flowers and pretty music and lovely ladies, there's something wrong with him. I associate them all together--and birds.

Baum: Do you belong to a country club in Bakersfield?

Camp: Oh, I belonged to two of them for many years, and I decided, after many years of paying out twenty dollars or thirty dollars--now forty dollars--a month to each club when I never went to either one of them, maybe once or twice a year to eat, why, I decided that what I was doing was spending that kind of money subsidizing things that I abhor, and that is whiskey, and every time I went I'd have to push my way through the glasses and bottles--not exactly that bad, but figuratively speaking. So I was just subsidizing drunkenness and carousing that I don't approve of, so I withdrew.

I'm no clubber, I don't like clubs for the sake of clubs. I love people, to get together, but I'd rather have them in my home or go to their homes than be in some place where the glasses are clinking all the time. Now, if it's a lovely country club, and I've been in many of them, where you can take your family--I wrote them a letter and said, "Clubs will never be what they ought to be until you put your clubbing and your drinking back in some rooms where families do not see them."

We belong to a tennis club which is a small country club, you might say, but there's no whiskey. Families go there with their kids and there are swimming pools and they play tennis and have picnics.

Baum: Do you disapprove of drinking?

Camp: No. I've never had a drink myself in my life, but that's not because I disapprove of it. I just haven't, and I don't know that--.

Mrs.

Camp: He disapproves of the excessiveness--.

Camp: I thoroughly disapprove of drunkenness.

Mrs.

Camp: Most people do.

Camp: Well, I'm not sure. I do not disapprove if somebody wants to take a drink. I'm not going to oppose that, but to flaunt

Camp: it around and offer it to children, I think it's one of the crimes of America today.

People say they've got to do it for social purposes, and that is one of the most--I wish I could think of a word that's bad enough to say in connection with it. I don't disapprove of it for that purpose but it does not have to be. But I'm quite sure that we have never insulted anybody in our home because we didn't serve liquor. We have received many many letters from people of importance and standing in different walks of life after they've been to our home. One navy man wrote back, an admiral, three or four years ago, and he said, "Well, it was a wonderful party. I certainly enjoyed it," and so on, "and for a sea-going man it certainly was something," meaning in spite of the fact he expected alcohol wherever he went, he had an awfully fine time. If he hadn't he wouldn't have written back.

I'm not against it. I'm against the excessive use of it.

Baum: I notice neither of you smoke either.

Camp: The same thing holds there. Do you smoke?

Baum: No.

Camp: Well, I just abhor seeing women smoke. I think it's awful, but I also think it's almost as bad for men to smoke. It's a personal matter though. Most of our friends, menfolks at least, do. I've no objection to it, but it's obnoxious to me, I'll say that. It's obnoxious to be around it.

I used to have a little fuss with Georgia, and I sometimes have a little fuss with Louise when I say that I don't care if you don't invite that woman because she'll sit there and puff a cigarette all the time. I don't mean that I don't want her to invite them, but if she doesn't come it suits me just as well. I think it's so useless, it's so much money wasted. But whiskey--well. My father lived to be ninety-nine years old, and he chewed tobacco. He started chewing when he was a youngster; he would trade hot biscuits with the Negro youngsters for chewing tobacco.

Baum: Didn't the Baptist church disapprove of tobacco? And drinking and dancing?

Camp: Well, I grew up square dancing. Our church didn't disapprove

Camp: of square dancing. But it was not accepted by the society people in town. We were looked down upon by the folks in town.

When I came to California I only knew how to square dance, but I took a lesson or two from a lady in Bakersfield. On Saturday night when twelve o'clock would come I would quit; I didn't dance after twelve o'clock, because it was Sunday morning. I just felt that it was the day of religious worship. A lot of people laughed at me--though they respected me. I'm not so strait-laced now!

POLITICAL PREFERENCES
(July 27, 1964, interview)

Early Democratic Background

Baum: I thought I'd ask what your political preferences have been from your early years on up.

Camp: I grew up in South Carolina, and because of that at first naturally I was a Democrat. At the time I came into the world everybody in South Carolina was Democratic excepting a few people, and those few who were registered Republicans had no social standing of any kind. It was a carry-over from the War Between the States.

The only Republican I'd ever heard of was when there'd be a Republican administration in Washington and the post-masters were appointed, and they'd be Republican. They didn't have as good social standing, and not just because they were Republicans. They just weren't as good people as the average citizen down there. That was a fact, not a prejudice.

Baum: Did you support Woodrow Wilson?

Camp: Oh yes, I was very fond of Woodrow Wilson. I thought he was just exactly right for the country. I wasn't old enough and didn't have enough experience to really know.

Baum: In 1928 there was an election between Al Smith and Herbert Hoover. You probably knew Hoover by then.

Camp: I knew Hoover then, yes. I liked him a lot, and I'd had experience in a business way with him and had been instrumental in his buying a farm in Kern County. I voted for him, even though I was still a Democrat.

Baum: Did you campaign for him?

Camp: No. At that time I was at the Bank of America--Bank of Italy it was then--and I was too busy to get out and campaign for anybody. But I did listen to the radio, and I did vote for him.

Camp: Looking back, I believe that Al Smith would have made a very fine President too. But he would have run into the same difficulties financially as Hoover did.

Baum: Did you vote for Hoover again in 1932?

Camp: No. In 1932 I, along with other Democrats, thought that Hoover had been partly to blame, although I now know that he wasn't. I was strong for Roosevelt, although I wasn't that active a Democrat.

An Anti-New Deal Democrat

Baum: Did you take any part in politics in the thirties?

Camp: No. I didn't take any part, except in conversation, as all citizens should. After Roosevelt was elected and they got their program lined out, why, then I was persuaded to join the organization.

Baum: Yes; you were in Washington for a while with the AAA.

Camp: I was urged in 1933 to join the U.S. Department of Agriculture because of my experience with cotton in the West and in the Southeast. I was told that I owed it to my country, that I must do it, that my five years of experience with the Bank of America--that I owed it to my country to go with the Department of Agriculture, and I did.

Baum: You had some unfavorable experiences there--.

Camp: In Washington? I had lots of them.

Baum: Did you continue to consider yourself a Democrat? Or did you decide to join the opposition?

Camp: I've always considered myself a loyal Democrat, and I still do today. But the New Deal, I was very much disillusioned with it when I got in there, working awfully hard to try to set up a farm program, cotton in particular, and they assigned some lawyers to us and when we found out what they were up

Camp: to I knew that something was wrong--that my Democratic Party had gone haywire.

Baum: Did you continue to vote for Roosevelt?

Camp: When I was there we were working with our noses to the grindstone up to 1936, and I did vote for Roosevelt the second time, and a few weeks after he was elected the second time we realized that he and his wife and family were party to the whole scheme of doing something to America--at least that's the way I felt about it--and turned against him, as bitterly as anyone could.

At first I thought Mrs. Roosevelt was all right, even thought we knew there were some bad ones in the department--Alger Hiss, for instance, was assigned to us as our legal adviser, and I guess I'm the first person that officially called him a communist. When I learned Mrs. Roosevelt was his sponsor I changed my opinion.

I might say here that Cully Cobb and I, after many months, came to the conclusion, and had documented reason for it, that those fellows had set out to use the Negroes, to induce the Negroes as a race, to join the Communist Party. They also included the sharecroppers all through the South, and they fully expected them to turn communist and turn against the landlords, and the Negroes to turn against all whites. That was their definite plan, there was no maybe-so about it.

Baum: 1940 was the election between Roosevelt and Willkie.

Camp: I didn't vote for Franklin Roosevelt, but I don't remember that I voted for Willkie. Like all others who were maybe hypnotized or entranced with somebody who comes from nowhere and looks like an emissary from the good place, we were enthused--but I don't know that I voted for him. I would almost have voted for anyone to get rid of Roosevelt. I just don't remember.

Baum: Dewey ran against Roosevelt in 1944.

Camp: I was very strong for Dewey. He made some wonderful speeches which read awfully good. Again, I wasn't close enough to him to know what he was up to, and maybe he wanted to do right, but he was being handled by the kingmakers and so on. I voted for him twice. I was voting against the New Deal. They had the same communists in there working, and I can use the word

Camp: without any fear of contradiction because a number of them have confessed it since; although Alger Hiss never has confessed it, he was put in prison for lying about it.

A Supporter of Richard Nixon

Baum: I think it was in 1948 that Nixon first came on the scene as candidate for senator from California.

Camp: Yes. He had been a congressman. I knew Nixon's uncle, Dr. Nixon, in Pennsylvania. He was a very fine agriculturist at the University of Pennsylvania, no, it was the A & M College in Pennsylvania. He and I had worked together a lot in potatoes, and also quite a lot on the OPA national committee, which met in Washington. He was a very forthright individual, states-righter, against any and all forms of socialism whatever. He was against the government programs. He was a much older man than I, but I respected and admired him very much.

Baum: He was against any government subsidy of potatoes?

Camp: He was against all of the government programs as they were being formulated then. When it came to the OPA prices of different commodities, I was sitting with him one day in a big crowd--we were on the same side of the argument--and he made his speech and it was definitely against all--. Well, if the OPA had to be, he wanted the prices to be reasonable and to be administered in a sensible way, and not by a czar in Washington pulling the lines. He made that pitch and got up and walked out.

Along with many other things, he's known as "Mr. Potato" in Pennsylvania. I was sitting with him at breakfast one morning while Nixon was still a congressman and had just announced that he might run for the Senate, and his uncle said to me, "He's crazy to run. He's safe where he is and he probably can't be elected senator."

I got up from breakfast and I was with Nixon shortly after that same day, and I told him what his uncle had said. He laughed and said, "Well, I'm going to surprise him."

Camp: I told him if he would run and would use that photograph that had Harry Bridges with his arm around Mrs. Helen Gahagan Douglas, or vice-versa, I've forgotten which, if he would use that as a poster and post it all over the state of California I'd pay for them all. That's how strongly I felt against Helen Gahagan Douglas, because Mrs. Roosevelt stayed at her house every time when she came to California.

An Informative Taxi Ride

Camp: When I was in Washington in the Department of Agriculture Mrs. Roosevelt was the boss, the big boss, of the Department. Any Red that she wanted, any do-gooder that she wanted, she would just simply telephone over to the Secretary's office and they'd hire him or her. As a matter of fact, Jim Farley, the chairman of the National Democratic Party, made his office in the Department of Agriculture for the first two years, I think, of Roosevelt's administration. Even though he was Postmaster General he had his office there, and all personnel hired in the Department had to have his O.K.

Baum: He kept a pretty tight rein on all appointees from every department.

Camp: Probably, I don't know. The fellow who ran it when he wasn't there in person, I've forgotten his name, he was a nice person, but--. But all Mrs. Roosevelt had to do was telephone them to hire XYZ, and I can tell of many instances and many individuals who told me they were hired, or I knew about it otherwise, just in that way.

One evening one little boy got in a taxi with me, it was raining; he spoke broken English and had a dark complexion, and he wanted to know if I objected to riding with him.

I said, "No, not at all." Then he told me he was moving to Washington just that week.

I said, "Where do you work?"

"For the government."

Camp: "What branch?"

"Department of Agriculture."

"Oh," I said. "For whom?"

He said, "The personnel department."

"Have you been working for them a long time?"

"No, just last Wednesday."

I said, "Well, what are you doing?"

He said, "I'm writing a brochure of procedure."

"Procedure of what?"

"I'm writing a procedure of the new setup of the field staff"--I've forgotten just for what now, fruits and vegetables or something--"I'm going to have a field staff all over the country, and it will have to do with consumer pricing, also in conjunction with other agricultural activities."

"What agricultural school did you go to?"

"Oh, I didn't. I went to--"--some college in New York, I had never heard of it.

"How come you are in the Department of Agriculture?"

"Oh," he said, "my girlfriend comes down every weekend and works with Mrs. Roosevelt, spends the weekend at the White House. She's a National Student Union worker." (I'm not sure that's the right name.)

I said, "Do you know the director of personnel?"

He said, "No."

"And you're working for the personnel department?"

"Yes." He said, "I'll get to know the Secretary of Agriculture before I know the director because my girlfriend is close to Mrs. Roosevelt."

"Well," I said, "it just happened that today noon I had

Camp: lunch with the director of personnel of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, who is a friend of mine." It was following that that he said he'd get to know the Secretary of Agriculture before he'd know the personnel director.

He got out at some hotel and I went on to my hotel, and I picked up the phone and called people who should know. He had said he was setting up this procedure, and that the following Wednesday there were going to be lots of new employees coming into the Department of Agriculture and this would be the procedure. There'd be a training school for them and then they'd go into the different states. But I think I can say that the procedure never got to work because I called some folks I knew. I never knew his name, but I did telephone the people who should know something about it.

Baum: You said he spoke broken English. Where did he come from?

Camp: I haven't the slightest idea. New York was his state. I don't mean that he was a colored man, but he didn't have a light skin.

Baum: It was an interesting taxi ride.

Camp: Yes. But he should have ridden with somebody else. [Laughter] I thought afterwards, what a nut. Anybody who would say to a stranger what he said to me is just plain--. But it shows what they were trying to do. They were very brazen. The National Student Union folks at that time were all hell-bent for saving the world, their way.

Baum: You first met Nixon through his uncle, is that right?

Camp: No, I met him as congressman representing California. Before I'd had experience with him I called for a congressional hearing on a two-and-a-half year picket line we'd had. He was on the House Labor Committee, and he and three or four other congressmen came out to Bakersfield and we had a hearing there on the so-called "DiGiorgio strike." It never was a strike, but the newspapers called it a strike. It was a picket line put in by the AF of L, by Mitchell, who was head of the national organization of agricultural workers. I'd had experience with Mitchell in Washington when he came down to Washington from Memphis and brought some sharecroppers--so-called sharecroppers--and I knew his affiliations and knew they were up to no good. We've talked earlier about this.

Camp: But Nixon and the others, including those who wanted to vote for the administration because it was fostering this in a very definite way, it was so raw when they got there that it was a unanimous decision. They came out with a decision that these fellows were persecuting the farmers and that it shouldn't be. So we got a verdict and an agreement that they'd never do it again and not use a film they'd made in Hollywood-- Ed Murrow was the commentator on it.

That was the first time I had worked with him. Since Alger Hiss had been my attorney in Washington, and I knew him, and since Nixon was the one who later got him, when Nixon later wanted to run for the Senate I was perfectly willing to go all out and do everything I could for him. He had done the country a real service.

Baum: Did you collaborate with Nixon on the Alger Hiss matter?

Camp: I gave him all the information I had. I'll just say that and let it go, because if I said more I'd be trying to claim credit for something I didn't do. Nixon deserves all the credit.

Baum: I think quite a few farmers went along with you and supported Nixon in 1948.

Camp: That's right. He had been a real fighter, a real American, and the thing that we liked about him so much was that he was so factual. He'd come in with certain things and proceed to build up a case based completely on facts.

Baum: Was Phil Bancroft in that 1948 campaign? I know he worked for Nixon in 1952.

Camp: I didn't work with Phil Bancroft in '48, I don't know.

Farmers for Eisenhower and Nixon, 1952 and 1956

Baum: How did you get involved in the 1952 campaign on the Republican side?

Camp: In 1952 Phil Bancroft called me in Memphis, Tennessee, where

Camp: I was making a speech on irrigation--they still thought I was crazy over it--and he said, "Bill, you're chairman of Farmers for Eisenhower."

I said, "Oh no, I'm not. I'm a Democrat."

He said, "That doesn't make any difference. You are. We had a meeting and decided, and that's that."

I said, "I was for Taft, Phil."

He said, "So was I, but he didn't get it."

Then I thought a little and I said, "Well, make it Nixon and Eisenhower and I'll be happy to do it."

He said, "I'd like it that way too, but we have to go Eisenhower and Nixon." [Laughter]

I said, "Well, I don't like Eisenhower, you know that. But that's what we've got, so O.K."

Phil said, "You take the chairmanship and I'll be vice-chairman," and as I recall that's the way the advertisements and news stories came out in the papers.

Nixon decided that it wouldn't be politic to use the picture I wanted him to use [Helen Gahagan Douglas and Harry Bridges], but he did do a lot of conversation and he's been damned for it ever since, for saying that this congresswoman was not good. I agreed with him, anyway.

Baum: What did the farmers for Eisenhower and Nixon do in 1952? What part did they play in the campaign?

Camp: Well, they did a lot of advertising, did a lot of radio work and meetings, a lot of individual talks around at different groups wherever they could get somebody to listen. I think it was effective. The part of the farmers was effective.

Baum: Did they collect money?

Camp: Oh yes. It always costs money to publicize. And it's no disgrace. I used to wonder before I got into it, but it has to be. Back when I was a kid in South Carolina, all the candidates running for office, local, county, state and national, went together from place to place and made speeches. All together. And there'd be big crowds, everybody there.

Camp: You don't have it that way today.

Baum: And you worked on the Eisenhower-Nixon ticket again in 1956.

Camp: Yes.

Baum: Were you chairman?

Camp: Down there locally. Statewide I believe that Phil Bancroft was chairman that year.

Farmers for Nixon, 1960

Camp: Then when Nixon ran, 1960, I worked for him, and when he ran for governor there were five or six of us co-chairmen for him.

Baum: I have this here: 1960, "Farmers for Nixon. Camp was one of four co-chairmen, along with John L. Sullivan of Yuba City, Harvey Lynn of Arlington"--

Camp: He's president of the citrus association. That's right, we were four that year. I represented the San Joaquin Valley, Lynn represented down below.

Baum: And "W. J. Thornburg, Jr., of Holtville. Former president of the Western Growers Association."

Camp: I don't know him. I knew who he was.

The following year when Nixon ran for governor there were more of us.

Baum: Eleven. They divided up the state into more precincts, I suppose. So you've been on Nixon's campaign work since he really started to run in '48.

Camp: Yes; I didn't know him when he ran in 1946. And that so-called money fund that they nationally made so much light of when he was running as vice-president, well, I've forgotten how many people donated one hundred dollars apiece, but there was one from Bakersfield who did.

Camp: I frankly knew nothing about the fund, but I'd have been happy to have given one hundred dollars. I just wasn't contacted. But when it became known, I talked to this one fellow from Bakersfield to see if he was scared, and he was a little nervous, but I said, "If you want to withdraw and put my name in there, you can duck and say anything you want to. I'd like the publicity, if that's what it takes, to say that I'm for this kind of thing." But he stayed in, and I was not a party to it.

Differences with Nixon, 1962

Baum: That puts you in Nixon's camp till 1964--.

Camp: I wouldn't say till '64. In '62 some of us told Nixon he had blown a fuse in that campaign. He did some things that I in particular disagree with very much.

Go back to 1960 and you will find newspaper headlines all over the state of California saying that--and I notice Roger Kent's name in today's paper--Roger Kent said then, when he was state chairman of the Democratic Committee, if it hadn't been for the bigoted farmers in California in 1960, Kennedy would have carried California. And he said especially the bigoted farmers in the San Joaquin Valley. Well, he had to be hitting at some of us, because that's where I live. I was very happy and I told him, "All the folks who worked for Nixon worked hard, but if you insist on it we'll just bow and say thank you." If we can only do that same thing this year for Goldwater I'll be extremely happy.

Baum: You weren't so happy with Nixon's campaign in '62. I guess one of the problems was that he didn't win.

Camp: No, no. Before the election we'd had--we didn't fall out with him, but we had very, very wide differences in opinion on a lot of things, and I think his stand was not what it should have been on a lot of things.

For instance, I'd never heard of the John Birch Society until about the time he came out denouncing it. I didn't know a single John Bircher, and I didn't see anything in it that was subversive,

Camp: trying to overthrow our government, and I asked him why he had demanded that every Republican resign from an organization. Before he answered it I said, "Suppose you were to denounce me because I'm a Democrat, and I'm on this committee, and you say I've got to get out of the Democratic Party before I can vote for you. I'd tell you to go to hell. You know very well you can't be elected without a lot of Democrats, and I think you're crazy to make this kind of demand of individuals. You made a blanket denouncement of something that I haven't seen anything subversive about." And it did cost him an awful lot of votes.

Baum: I was wondering if you're doing any political work this year.
[July 27, 1964]

Camp: Every time I can open my mouth and get somebody to listen, here or anywhere in the United States, who will let me tell them what I think of Barry Goldwater, I am happy to do so. I think that little thing, A Choice, Not An Echo, tells it; this is our first and last chance for a long time to get a government that will be for America all the way through. I don't mean that our present government is against America necessarily, but this will be one that will go all out to restore American government to what we believe is a sound, non-socialistic type of government.

Personally, I am away from California so much of the time that I have to just do whatever I can wherever I am.

W. B. CAMP--EDUCATIONAL PHILANTHROPIST

Loans for College Education

Baum: I know you've been interested in education for a long time. You gave an organ to Bakersfield Junior College... Do you work with the junior college there?

Camp: Well yes, we do, in a number of things. Grace Bird, president of Bakersfield Junior College, I guess was responsible for our giving that organ to the school.

Baum: And you set up some scholarship funds.

Camp: Mrs. Camp and I have several different places where we sponsor poor country girls and boys. At least that's what we would designate it, but it isn't confined to country people. They must be poor people, needy, and worthy, who couldn't go to college otherwise.

There are funds now being made available that make it easier for them, in addition to these, and we work with them too. The National U.S.A. Student Aid Fund, I believe it's called. Our friend A. D. Marshall is president of it, with headquarters in New York.

Baum: This is where you can borrow money through the bank.

Camp: Yes. It's two or three times as big now as it was last year when I told you about it, and it's only two and a half years old. A worthy student can go to his local bank, no matter where, and make application. Most banks in California have co-operated with it. The forms are sent to the organization, and if he's approved--and if he's worthy he will be approved--it comes back quickly, and this means the fund guarantees the repayment of the loan to the local bank. So far as the student is concerned, he only deals with his local bank. Private enterprise.

Baum: You could say that the organization is a co-signer.

Camp: Yes. And they've had very very few go sour so far. It's not available to a student until he's ready to go in as a sophomore. They're working toward making it available in the freshman year. Ours is available after the student makes good the first semester--I mean Mrs. Camp's and mine.

Baum: This is a loan fund, then. Is it at any particular school?

Camp: They have it at several schools. Clemson, Limestone, Whittier, Cal Poly, and a few at some other schools. At those institutions the faculty has a committee, and we have nothing to do with it. The fund is put there and they do the rest. It has been very satisfactory.

At Clemson two years ago they introduced me to one of the fund recipients; actually it was a girl waiting on the table in the Clemson House Hotel. She was the daughter of the janitor at the school, a needy individual. She later became president of her class. She was going to a sister college to Clemson, and she had drawn on the loan fund.

Baum: So you have established a fund at these colleges, a repayment fund.

Camp: Yes. We keep replenishing the funds when they need more. At the present time we have aimed at having a grand total each year of a hundred students among the several schools.

Baum: That's a big number of people.

Camp: Yes, but when you are dealing with boys and girls of this kind, and they know they can get the money if they need it, they're not going to need so much of the fund. They work and make it, but they have the satisfaction of knowing they're not going to be lacking. It's quite a mental satisfaction. While some borrow almost the total amount to go through, others will get jobs and require very little.

Baum: How is the record on repayment?

Camp: Complete. I guess there are a few at Clemson who are still taking graduate work, though it was intended just for the four years.

Baum: When did you start setting up these funds?

Camp: Well, I didn't go to high school but I took an examination in competition for a scholarship to get into Clemson. Years later I asked the college to figure out how much money my scholarship would have amounted to, compounding it twice a year, at 8 percent interest. Whatever it was, a sizeable amount, I gave them a check for it, and that was the beginning of a fund. The idea grew from that.

I couldn't have gone to school at all except for something like that, and Louise was in maybe not as tight a situation, but she was the oldest of nine children and I guess there wasn't a lot of money, and we both know what it means to work your way through. So it was natural for us to think of that. Certainly it took me out of--well, I was very happy, but it gave me a broader base, it made me want to help other country people.

Baum: Is there any qualification for the loan fund applicant?

Camp: The only qualification that we set up was that he have a record that was worthy and be recommended by a number of his neighbors, in his church, the county agent--people like that. And no interest charged until he gets out of school, and then the rate is very low, lower than the bank rate, and he pays it back when he can.

Baum: Do you try to encourage students in a special department?

Camp: I intended it to be in agriculture, at first, and then Mrs. Camp and I are interested in other things, so there's no rigid--I presume nearly half of them have gone into something else.

Baum: So agriculture is not a qualification.

Camp: No. We at first thought it would be, but it hasn't been.

Baum: Well, music was Mrs. Camp's major, wasn't it?

Camp: Yes. And yet she became a full-fledged farmer in her own right.
[Laughing]

Irrigation Fund to Promote Teaching Uses of Irrigation

Baum: Another thing you've done is the irrigation foundation at Clemson.

Camp: Yes. And we have the feeling that it was one of the best things we could have done.

Baum: How does it work?

Camp: Well, I don't know that you could call it a foundation, exactly. Let me give you a little history on it.

As you know, I grew up on the farm and almost every year we would have dry spells--the crops needed water but it didn't rain at the right time. There was a creek or branch here and there, water running all around us going to waste; and yet we were working and plowing, me in my shirttail, barefooted, dust flying everywhere, up to our ankles, and it didn't rain and it didn't rain. It didn't mean anything to me then because I didn't know anything about irrigation, but that went on every year. We suffered, and more years than not we suffered severely, from the lack of enough water at the right time.

But when I came out here and it was all irrigation, naturally I began thinking about it. Why didn't the local people, the state or federal people, think about irrigation back there? Well, they just didn't. We acquired a farm back there and decided to irrigate, and then I tried to get the colleges interested. I didn't make much progress; they kept saying yes, they were, but they didn't.

Finally when our two sons graduated from Clemson we decided that we'd call their bluff. We said, "All right, we'll put up some money and you hire a couple of agricultural engineers and send them out to learn how to irrigate. We'll buy the irrigation equipment, pumps and so on mounted on a big truck, and you put these trained engineers on the trucks and demonstrate all over the country as to what the value of water is for different crops."

We selected a committee to handle that. I selected it myself, fearing that the professors would do what they had been saying, and that was nothing. I was fortunate in the folks that were selected for this committee; they were very active--one was president of the South Carolina Farm Bureau, another was agricultural county agent. And after a few years it was demonstrated conclusively, in the mind of anybody who was open, the value of irrigation.

But there were still people in the schools who wouldn't believe it. Some eighteen years ago I was asked to talk to

Camp: the annual meeting of the Southern Agricultural Workers Association being held in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I talked to about two thousand people there from the different states, and they thought I was crazy and said so.

But fortunately some of them became interested, and the newspapers became interested and ran editorials and articles, and just like a snowball--it didn't roll very fast, but it wasn't long until Louisiana was irrigating a lot. Today there isn't a good peach grower in any of the southern states who doesn't irrigate. The same is true of tobacco, and the same is beginning to be true of the better cotton growers.

So money was put up. We called it an irrigation fund, not a foundation--though it was funneled from the W. B. Camp Foundation.

Trustee of Whittier College

Baum: When did you first become interested in Whittier College? Was that through Richard Nixon?

Camp: I presume so. I guess it was through Nixon, and then Paul S. Smith there, the president of Whittier College, knew that I was interested in what Nixon had done and he came to see me one day and he got my philosophy and I got his on good government, the way it was going, and he says, "Well, I've been dreaming of a Chair of Good Government at Whittier, and what do you think of Richard Nixon?"

I said, "I think it'd be wonderful."

So he went on and talked to four or five others, and we joined on a project and put out a brochure to sponsor a Chair, the Richard Milhous Nixon Chair of Good Government. Following that he asked me if I'd make a commencement speech at Whittier, in 1957, and next year he gave me an honorary degree there. I guess I had been there the year before when they gave an honorary degree to Nixon, and I had dinner with him afterward. We sat around the table and talked awhile. And then he asked me to be a trustee, in 1960, I think.

Camp: Mr. LaMotte T. Cohu, the fellow who started the big aviation industry in San Diego and then sold it out, he's a trustee at Whittier. All the trustees are very much interested in and very proud of Whittier.

Baum: I'd think financial matters would be the biggest problem, aren't they?

Camp: Yes, and yet Paul Smith, I have to hand it to him, is a good money raiser. He's done a good job. I was very proud of Harold Spencer, who was the dean, and went to San Fernando State College as vice-president. I liked him very much.

Do you remember the name of Richard Nixon's cousin, the writer?

Baum: Jessamyn West.

Camp: She was the speaker at Whittier one year. She made a good talk, very humorous.

Member of Advisory Board, Pepperdine College

Baum: You're also associated with George Pepperdine College.

Camp: I hadn't known too much about Pepperdine College. Mr. and Mrs. Pepperdine gave all their money to establish the college; they were the ones who started Western Auto Stores. It apparently had a hard go for money until Dr. Norville Young came in. He is now the president, an excellent man, and he brought with him as vice-president Dr. William Teague, who is a Texas boy and a go-getter. They have been able to surround themselves with a lot of people who have become interested and they've set up a board, the president's Advisory Board, which is outside the Board of Trustees, which officially runs the school.

Baum: It's not a governing board.

Camp: No. But they are dedicated men, of all nationalities, all religions.

Baum: What denomination is Pepperdine College?

Camp: Oh, it's the Church of Christ. But one of the big donors belongs to a totally different church, and one of the fellows who is interested is an Italian, a Catholic, but he's very interested in the way Pepperdine runs its school.

It's the only school in California, one of the few in the United States, which has refused to accept one single dollar from the federal government, for any purposes. They've been begged, frankly, by federal emissaries. That in itself has attracted a number of men who are interested in free enterprise and the freedom of the individual, to get completely away from big government and so on. Because of that they're getting a lot more private money than they would otherwise. That philosophy does attract people, naturally. Louise and I were very interested when we heard these people talking. Young and Teague make speeches. And today I would say Pepperdine is ten times stronger financially than it was ten years ago. Oh yes.

Baum: They have a good academic reputation, and do they have a good basketball team?

Camp: I didn't know that, but they are going to be a real school--they are already.

To show what we think of it--a young man who lives in Bakersfield, whom we hadn't known until a few years ago but we met him while he was in high school, and he was interested in the free enterprise system as a student, and we got wise to it and invited him over and he came over more and more, and we sponsored him financially and sent him back to New York to a special school for three or four weeks, to study the free enterprise system.

Baum: Was that the Foundation For Economic Education (FEE)?

Camp: No, but he did go to that building, which was there. He's a very brilliant boy. When he finished at Bakersfield College, because of our interest in Pepperdine he went on to Pepperdine and finished two years there, and Mrs. Pepperdine herself told me at the graduation exercises in June that Trent Deviny is one of the valuable students and has meant an awful lot to the school. He has a good mind. He's coming up to Hastings now to study law. In his activities in school he became president of the Young Republicans and then became the president of the Young Republicans in all the California colleges.

Camp: We did not know his mother and father at all. In fact I would say that his home background influence wasn't too good, and he was feeling for something or somebody and Louise and I just happened to be the ones that he got hold of. His mother tells everybody that he thinks more of us than he does of his own parents, which is a terrible thing to say, but she's no credit to him. But he's going to make a fine citizen in California and make a name for himself.

He's been to Washington a number of times, and when he finds certain leads on things he picks up and goes.

Trent just swears by Pepperdine, says, "It's a tremendous school."

Baum: You're still a member of the president's Advisory Board? (Pepperdine College)

Camp: Yes.

Baum: How often does it meet?

Camp: They call us to meet a couple or more times a year.

Baum: For a special problem?

Camp: No, not really. One of them was, but we just get together whenever we feel there's something we'd like some conversation about.

Baum: Are certain board members ever called in for some special consultations? Does it meet as a board, or does the president call on individuals who might know something particular...?

Camp: Actually, every time we have met as the president's Advisory Committee he has had several of the trustees meet with us.

The school is squeezed in close to USC; it looked like it never could grow, but they stepped out and bought enough surrounding land that they are growing.

Agricultural Journalism for Cal Poly

Baum: What is your relationship to Cal Poly? I know you know Dr.

Baum: McPhee, the president.

Camp: Dr. Julian McPhee has been a good friend of mine for many years, a very fine dedicated administrator. I'm convinced, and I've seen it from the beginning, that he more than any other fifty or a hundred people put together is responsible for Cal Poly both at San Luis Obispo and down at Pomona. He's done a tremendous job.

I got to know him well before he became president. When I was in Washington with the AAA we wanted somebody from a college out here to come and sit in Washington and see what was going on, and tell us, Cully Cobb and me, what he thought, to seriously give us his opinion. We weren't bureaucrats, we were just there for a job that we wanted to get done and get home. Well, we had him come, and he stayed several months and he did such a wonderful job that he and I became better friends when I came back here.

Later he wanted to start--a lot of us had been complaining about agricultural writers, they didn't know what they were writing about. I mean the writers of newspaper articles and radio scripts and so on. Particularly because of my activity with Associated Farmers and all the radical labor leaders trying to organize, we couldn't get the right kind of stories. So Dr. McPhee had the bright idea that we start a school of agricultural journalism; there wasn't any at Berkeley or Davis or anywhere in California. We took it up at the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, and John Pickett and John somebody-else who was head of the poultry division were terribly interested in it. We discussed it a while and said, all right, let's give them some money. So they have the only agricultural journalism course being taught in California.

Baum: I didn't know that.

Camp: Well, that's why we were interested in it, because we couldn't get good stories. The folks writing them didn't know a thing in the world about agriculture. We believe that most people want to be honest, they want to tell the truth, but if they don't know the facts they'll take statements from anybody and assume they're correct.

They've already placed a lot of people in radio and newspapers. There's a demand for more people than they can graduate--in radio and newspapers and public relations work with related agricultural industries and so on. I was in San

Camp: Luis Obispo in January or February to make a speech to the Farm Bureau, and when we got to the banquet place a young lady came up and introduced herself as a reporter from the local paper. After we'd talked a while she said, "I was able to go through Cal Poly because of your fund there."

Baum: She had drawn on one of your scholarship funds and had taken agricultural journalism?

Camp: That's right.

One came to Bakersfield to a meeting a year or two ago; he was with Cal-Cot in their news media, public relations. So we run into them like that here and there. Recently somebody said they went to Clemson--within the past few weeks.

Baum: It must be gratifying.

Camp: It is. If there were a lot of them who didn't pay back--and there won't be--these others would be worth while. At Limestone College, where Louise is a trustee, there is a student fund, the Louise P. Camp Student Fund; there is not a default, and they're all girls. I would have thought that girls would be the first ones to default.

Baum: They'd get married and wouldn't be able to pay it back.

Camp: Yes, but not a one, they all pay back.

Mrs. Louise Camp, Trustee of Limestone College

Baum: How long have you been a trustee at Limestone College, Mrs. Camp?

Mrs.

Camp: Five or six years.

Camp: Or seven.

Baum: Do you get back to the trustee meetings?

Mrs.

Camp: Yes, twice a year, fall and spring.

Baum: Are all the trustees women?

Mrs.

Camp: No. The bulk of them are men. But it's a girls' college.

Camp: They elected her trustee after they elected her one year as the outstanding graduate.

Baum: What kind of problems do the trustees deal with there?

Mrs.

Camp: Very much the same problems as any other college. They're a small school and want to remain so.

Baum: What does Limestone specialize in?

Mrs.

Camp: It's a general liberal arts college.

Baum: Has the question come up of making it coeducational?

Mrs.

Camp: It is coeducational insofar as day students go, but they do not have dormitories for boys. But it's a girls' school primarily. Originally it was a Baptist school.

Baum: I think that's true of a lot of the small colleges, they started out as church schools and became independent. But they retain some of the original flavor.

Mrs.

Camp: A little bit. But Limestone now is completely independent.

Baum: Whittier is completely independent now, isn't it?

Camp: Yes.

Baum: It still had a Quaker flavor when I was a student there in the 1940's.

Camp: I was superintendent of Sunday school at Clemson. I was a very strong Baptist, but in the auditorium of the college a whole non-denominational group of us met with a professor we liked a lot.

Service on the Boards of Clemson College, American University,
and Formerly on the Institute of International Education

Baum: I know you've kept up your ties with Clemson. Do you serve

Baum: in many capacities there?

Camp: On the foundation--I'm a trustee of the Clemson Alumni Foundation.

Baum: This is for scholarships?

Camp: Oh no. We handle all the private and corporate money that comes into the school.

Baum: I've got one more educational institution listed: the American University at Washington, D.C.

Camp: I serve on the business advisory board, with Goldwater. That's why I know him pretty well and think an awful lot of him.

Baum: So you know him personally?

Camp: Yes. Just the same as I served at Whittier with Nixon. It's not all work and no play, but he's very studious and serious-minded when we're sitting at a meeting.

Baum: How often does the advisory board meet?

Camp: It tries to meet twice a year, but I don't get to it all the time. Goldwater was appointed about the same time I was, January 1958.

Baum: Let's see, you are a member and trustee of the Institute of International Education.

Camp: Was. Well, I knew enough about it that I didn't allow myself to continue on it.

Baum: You gave it up?

Camp: That's right. This is the one who wrote and wrote and telephoned, and I knew nothing about it, and finally a lady up here who was a local delegate, I've forgotten her name now, she was the executive secretary for California, she got me to attend two meetings. It's a national organization.

Baum: Where is it located?

Camp: New York and Washington. New York is the headquarters. I met with them. Some of the discussions were such as to arouse my curiosity quite a bit, and I bored in a little bit and got

Camp: not too far the first time--did later, but the first time I didn't, and they felt they'd found a convert and I began receiving letters from them, particularly from Dr. Remsen Dubois Bird, ex-president of Occidental College. Anyway, it turned out that he and all the rest of them were far too liberal for me. And yet they were, and are, the organization--they use the word "service"--which services most of the students that come and go, ours and others from and to America.

Baum: Is this a private institute?

Camp: Yes, but they had a contract with the State Department to service, and were servicing, according to their statements, 80 per cent of all the students.

Baum: This means they helped them get situated--.

Camp: Selecting them, meeting them at the plane and boat coming and going. They were much too liberal for me. And the fellow who was heading it in New York had been one of the head men of the San Francisco organization of--what was that organization that they discovered later was a pro-communist outfit? Institute of Pacific Relations. Anyhow, what I saw made me know I wasn't interested, so I wouldn't allow myself to continue.

Baum: So you weren't a member and trustee very long.

Camp: It was for a year, until I could see what it was. I may be all wet too; I don't think I am.

National Rivers and Harbors Congress Directors held their April 1966 meeting at the Glen Canyon Dam project of the Bureau of Reclamation, with headquarters at Page, Arizona. A feature of the trip was a boat trip on Lake Powell, the reservoir created by construction of Glen Canyon dam, and a short hike from the lake to Rainbow Bridge National Monument. The hiking group as they undertook the jaunt to the bridge through Rainbow Canyon was, left to right: Gus Muehlenhaupt, Superintendent, Glen Canyon National Recreational Area, National Park Service, Page, Arizona; Francis A. Pitkin, Director, Camp Hill, Pennsylvania; Walter H. Cahagan, Director, New York, New York; General W.F. Cassidy, Chief, Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C.; W.B. Camp, Director, Bakersfield, California; General J.L. Person, Executive Vice President, National Rivers and Harbors Congress, Washington; D.C.; James R. Townsend, Director, Durham, North Carolina; Herbert G. West, Director, Walla Walla, Washington; Henry H. Buckman, President, National Rivers and Harbors Congress, Orange Park, Florida; Vaud E. Larson, Glen Canyon Project Construction Engineer, Page, Arizona; J.E. Sturrock, Director, Austin, Texas; Clarence R. Tull, Director, Riverdale, Maryland; Floyd E. Dominy, Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation; R.L. Ireland, Director, Cleveland, Ohio. Photograph by Mel Davis - April 14, 1966.

March 1955 - Secretary of Agriculture Benson spoke to the Kern County Potato Growers Association at their Annual Meeting. Pictured at traditional breakfast in W.B. Camp home during meeting, left to right around table: W.B. Camp, head of table back to camera; Congressman Clifford G. McIntire; Hugh S. Jewett; Mrs. Bernice Harrell Chipman, owner of Bakersfield California; Secretary of Agriculture Ezra T. Benson; Mrs. Donald M. Camp; Carl F. Wente, retired President, now Chairman Executive Committee of Bank of America; Mrs. Tom Eveleth, Benson's sister; George Montgomery, President Kern County Land Company; and Mrs. Ezra T. Benson.



W. B. CAMP--CITIZEN--FARMER
(July 28, 1964, interview)

President Eisenhower's People-to-People Program

Baum: I wanted to ask you about the Agricultural Advisory Committee in 1957. You were appointed to a seven-man committee by President Eisenhower.

Camp: You remember they appointed several. It was a people-to-people campaign, and I was one of seven representing agriculture. It was called, for lack of a better name maybe, a people-to-people program. Eisenhower launched that and they made a lot to do about it all over, world-wide. They had people representing one thing and some representing another. We had quite a lot of meetings all across the country. Some of us made some trips to foreign lands and would come back and report. Louise and I went to Europe and spent all of our time out in the country studying agriculture.

Baum: Was it as the result of this committee that you went to Europe with your card that read "W. B. Camp, Farmer"?

Camp: Going over the first time with that card was before Eisenhower launched the people-to-people program. But probably my selection for the committee was based upon what I had done then.

Baum: Did that committee accomplish very much?

Camp: Well, you never know just what you've done. Many times they had most of the national agricultural organizations in on the meetings, and discussed what was what. These Farm Bureau campaigns, the trips now sponsored by the California Farm Bureau and others across America have started--I'm not going to say because of that, but my guess is that the germ was planted because of those meetings.

Camp: As I've said in earlier discussions, as to exactly who gets credit for what, that's of no consequence. If you can get some seeds planted and get a job done, and the folks who do it may not have the slightest idea where it started from, it's quite all right.

Baum: We're interested in where things started.

Camp: Well, I don't want to be as an individual guilty of trying to say that our committee did this and so, unless it was something that was dependent entirely on me.

Baum: This committee doesn't exist any longer?

Camp: Oh yes. It has carried on even though Eisenhower's not there. They have regular meetings, most of them in Washington now.

Baum: Do they meet once a year?

Camp: They try to meet twice a year, but it hasn't been regular. Benson met with us a time or two when he was Secretary. The president of the American Farm Bureau met with us almost every time, and so did the Grange, and the Farmers Union. Though they differed in a lot of things there was no differing in the desirability of this type of a program.

Baum: Is the Farmers Union very active?

Camp: The Farmers Union nationally is headed by Jim Patton, and he is, well, I just received a publication this morning called The Washington News Beat, and it says that Jim Patton heads AFL-CIO "Industrial Peace Council," an admitted propaganda front for big labor. But the national Farmers Union is very active.

Baum: I thought it had vanished.

Camp: In California it did, and you know the why of it here. Vince Garrod was the president of the California unit of the Farmers Union up until, I would say, about 1940-something. I received a telegram from Congressman John Phillips in Washington, I received a telephone call from John Pickett, editor of the Pacific Rural Press at that time, both of them asking me if I could raise five thousand dollars statewide to save the Farmers Union from being taken over by Patton

Camp: and socialists, nationally. So I went to Rotary that day and I asked a few friends to stay back and told them the story, showed them the telegrams, and I raised the five thousand dollars there in the Bakersfield Club and sent it to Vince Garrod that night, and he changed the Farmers Union in California from Farmers Union to California Farmers Incorporated, and Vince Garrod is still the president of it, he lives down at San Jose. He's also chairman of the board of Farmers Insurance Company.

Baum: The Farmers Union was a pretty leftist group.

Camp: Oh yes.

Baum: But I didn't think it was in California.

Camp: It wasn't. That's why they wanted to take it over. They (the national organization) were going to move in and take over, and they had to have money fast to save it, which they did. There is no Farmers Union in California now. That hasn't happened anywhere else so far as I know. In the Midwest the spirit is strongest; their headquarters is Denver.

Agricultural Hall of Fame

Baum: Well, tell me about the Agricultural Hall of Fame. How did you first become interested in that?

Camp: Well, I'll have to keep this open right there and tell you that some years ago, five years ago, I've forgotten how many, there were some people sitting together and several times they got to talking about there was a hall of fame for everything except the one that counts most, agriculture, and one thing led to another and they decided not to have an agricultural hall of fame as such; the more they talked the more they realized that that was just a small part of what it should be. There should be a national agricultural center, where America's agricultural heritage can be, not just displayed but shown in the flesh, you might say, exactly as farming was, as conditions were then, now, and projected into the future. So we got together and organized and there was quite a lot of competition

Camp: as to where it should be located. Finally Kansas City won, there were many reasons for that, and it was satisfactory to everybody.

So about that time Dr. Oliver Willham, the president of Oklahoma State University was the first man who talked to me and asked me if I would become a governor of the Agricultural Hall of Fame and National Center. I'd sat in with them some as chairman of the agricultural committee of the U.S. Chamber. Then the thing moved along and they got a lot of people interested and raised some money and the 4-H Club people gave a flagpole. They got together enough money and bought three hundred acres of land, fifteen miles outside Kansas City, Kansas. They hired an architect and decided on how to proceed.

Well, they chose as the first speaker to dedicate this project the president of Farmers Union, Jim Patton. When some of us saw that name, we didn't go to the meeting, and wired them that we wouldn't give any more.

Baum: Who was pushing this in the first place?

Camp: Well, it was a whole group. Agriculture as a whole, you might say. The Farm Bureau, the cattlemen, various groups of farmers, some of the farm co-ops, private cattle stockyards and so on, and the Chamber of Commerce.

Anyway, when he made his first speech, it was the kind of a speech that a man of his philosophy would make, saying that no longer would they crawl on their tummies to industry and big business and so on. So thereupon big business and money faded away. They had at that time Mr. Firestone as development chairman--the president of Firestone Rubber Company--but following this, why, he was through. Then some of us wrote and said that until there was a new president we could not spend any more.

The group was reorganized and Dr. Oliver Willham, the president of Oklahoma State University, was elected president and chairman of the board. Dr. Oliver Willham is one of the best men in the country. He was one of the governors at that time. He began to pull the organization together, and they hired a good man who had been with the American Farm Bureau for twenty-odd years as their membership man, and he is now the executive vice-president of the Agricultural Center and Hall of Fame. He has gradually got rid of this left-wing

Camp: group and got others in there. About last January he and Dr. Willham and their executive committee wrote me and asked me to be chairman of the National Development Committee. They were reorganizing the whole set-up.

I thought of it for a few weeks and wrote back and said I couldn't do it, I had too many other commitments, and I maintained that position for a long time but finally they caught me in Topeka, Kansas, making a speech and told me in person just exactly what they had done, and so I said yes. We have been to a lot of people and instead of one great big building, which was the original concept, the architects have laid out ten buildings in a compound beautifully designed, each building costing about a quarter of a million to a half million. The first building will be finished next month.

Baum: This will be for exhibits?

Camp: Not just exhibits. One will be a big auditorium for meetings and lectures and what-have-you.

Baum: Do you think of it as a convention center for farm groups?

Camp: Yes; it will be for study groups, an agricultural educational center, really. It will not be in competition with any big city for big conventions, not that sort of thing. It's close enough to Kansas City where they have the big hotels, but they will come here for many of the lectures and demonstrations.

We expect to have a farm, showing the methods of farming as it was in different periods, maybe twenty-five years apart, from the beginning of time. This is something that's long overdue in America. Where can city youngsters go today and actually see farming and find out what it was like even twenty-five years ago? To say nothing about 250 years ago. The building that will be called the Hall of Fame is of least importance to all of us who are working on it now.

Baum: There will be that building, though?

Camp: Yes, but no one can be entered in that building until he has been dead and gone at least ten years. So it's not to honor anybody now. It's especially set up that way because we don't want anybody to say that we who are working on it are wanting to get the glory.

Baum: I think that saves a lot of trouble.

Camp: It does. The group working on this project is completely dedicated and not looking for any personal glory of any kind.

Baum: You've been working on the finance committee?

Camp: Well, the overall development committee, I'm chairman of that. We have quite a large committee and on that are some of the most prominent people in America, and they're all working.

Baum: How do you raise funds?

Camp: We have been to a lot of the major industries in America affiliated with agriculture--for instance, railroads. Santa Fe Railroad, I've spent a couple of days with them already, with the president of the railroad and all of his top advisers, and we said to them, "Agriculture's been good to you and you've been good to agriculture. It's been your biggest industry, and if you're interested in this project"--and they all manifested interest right quick--"why, it ought to be worth a full building to you, for the kids of the future."

My part is not asking for fifty dollars or a hundred dollars, but for them to invest in a building. Some of them are going to--some of the dairy people, instead of asking one of them to put up a building, they probably will as a group.

I'm not going to try to outline just what each will show, but each of these industries, farming and affiliated industries, will have a committee working on those things that should be shown. It's the biggest agricultural--not a dream, because it is a reality, in the making. It's almost paid for, about finished; the ground is all paid for. Not only do we have three hundred acres, but the state and county immediately stepped out and bought four hundred acres more adjoining it, so there's seven hundred acres available for this project. They can do anything in the world they want to.

You wonder why do they need so much land? Well, maybe they don't, but who knows? It's there.

The meeting I have tomorrow, the chairman of that board is terribly interested.

Baum: You came up here to Berkeley to attend that meeting, and part of your purpose here is the Agricultural Hall.

Camp: Well, it is, but I'm going as his guest, to meet his new officers.

Baum: This is Corn Products; now, does that have anything to do with your potato crop? Do they work with you?

Camp: Not as such. They do process some things, but I haven't worked with them on that.

When this Agricultural Center and Hall of Fame gets through, when it's mature and they get the ten buildings up, there'll be lots of work in the field and on some of the ponds, they'll have an investment of upwards of ten million dollars. Some of the large foundations, and others, have expressed an interest in putting up money, grants, to subsidize the carrying-on of this thing, make sure that it doesn't fold up.

One of the churches, I think it's a Catholic church, has just recently bought a site adjoining it and is going to put up a six million dollar seminary, the only place in the state of Kansas of its kind, they said. They went there only because there were going to be some other attractions--the Agricultural Center.

National Defense Resources Conference, 1960

Baum: What was the National Defense Resources Conference, held at Bakersfield College January 18-29, 1960? I know you were prominent in arranging that.

Camp: Maybe that's one that the Kennedy administration and the Johnson administration would like not to be talked about. Eisenhower was still president then.

Baum: The speaker was General Mark Clark.

Camp: Don't forget that I am a Democrat, but the Democratic administration we've got now, the Kennedy administration, closed these up. These are the informational schools that were being held around the country to acquaint people with

Camp: exactly--to alert people to the situation as it actually is, at home and abroad.

Baum: But it was government-sponsored?

Camp: Yes, it was a government-sponsored thing, and then the Bakersfield College and the Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce sponsored it on this end, and it was held in Bakersfield that year. The year before that I believe they held it in San Francisco.

This was a two-weeks' conference, every day from nine o'clock until five o'clock in the afternoon, and it was a working group. Believe me, they worked and worked hard--lectures and slides and moving pictures showing the services and subversive activities; it told about the training of our people to combat that, and so on. In other words, it showed precisely how our armed services go about getting ready for war, no matter what kind of war it is. In this case, then and now, they knew there were lots of communists they had to fight. Russia had said they were going to buy us, so they had to, and they were advising the people about it.

Baum: That was a civilian alertness program.

Camp: Exactly. That's a good name for it. About half the people were of the reserve military officers, and then civilians too. It was a wonderful thing and the people in Bakersfield learned more during that two weeks about the armed services and how they go about getting ready to combat the enemy than they ever had before. But you remember somebody started a word war in Washington and the administration said we must close down those kinds of schools, not to scare people. For my money, why, there must be some bad people in government somewhere who don't want us to get ready to fight communism.

Baum: Did you meet General Mark Clark at that time?

Camp: He came to our home overnight. But we had known Mark Clark and his wife a long time before. He's president of Citadel University in Charleston, South Carolina, and he's a good friend of Jimmy Byrnes, who was governor of South Carolina. He was the one who persuaded Clark to accept the Citadel post. We had known him quite awhile, and we like him a lot. That's why he came out, because he knew us. But he was happy to come, because he's ready and willing to speak out for America at any time.

Camp: Again I want to say, for the record, and I wish all the world could hear it, our folks in Washington don't want him to make the kind of speech he made that day to us. They don't want America to hear that kind of speech.

Mrs.

Camp: He told how his hands were tied behind his back and he could not carry on the war in Korea.

Camp: When MacArthur was pulled out they had Mark Clark come over, and the same thing happened to him.

I regret that those schools aren't going on now. They've got some that they call the same, but they're not letting them show the films and slides and the anti-communist things, about the communist threat. They said that Walker--whoever he is, I don't know Walker--they said that General Walker was in Europe preaching anti-communism; I become red hot when I think of it. When we go to war we ought to go to win.

Other Service Organizations

National Council on Crime and Delinquency

Baum: The National Council on Crime and Delinquency--you were appointed to that in 1962. I believe the honorary president was Roscoe Pound.

Camp: He's dead now.

Baum: Did that ever do very much?

Camp: It tried to. I attended one meeting, and one meeting for me was enough. I'm sure that their intention is good, but my observation was that Governor Brown and his appointees were using it to the nth degree for their own political purposes, and I'm sure that's not the intent of the thing at all. But that's what was going on. Maybe I was wrong, but I had a lot of things to do and I decided that was one of the things I could best afford to kick. The things they set out to do

Camp: and say they are going to do are fine and noble, and I'm for them.

Baum: Is that group still functioning?

Camp: I think so, but I told them I couldn't function with them.

American Good Government Society

Baum: And what was the American Good Government Society? It says, "William F. Knowland and W. B. Camp named to committee to study reforms of the U.S. electoral college system."

Camp: Well, it is an organization with headquarters in Washington, and they do quite a lot of work toward better government. They've got a paid staff back there and they have a George Washington dinner every year, which honors two people, usually a senator and a congressman. This came about shortly after Louise and I had attended a dinner at which they honored Senator Barry Goldwater and Congressman Herbert Barden from North Carolina. Goldwater had selected Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, a very close friend of his, to present him with the plaque. Well, it was following that dinner that they wrote to me and asked me if I would serve in that capacity. And we've done some work.

Baum: Is the purpose primarily to honor certain people in government

Camp: No, that's just one of the things. This particular thing was to help work on the method of electing the President, or rather to study to see if it should be changed, and there were several proposals made.

Baum: This is Paul Smith's specialty, isn't it? [President of Whittier College--Mrs. Baum's major professor]

Camp: Yes.

Baum: You didn't get into it through Paul Smith, did you?

Camp: No, not this one. That was why he was interested in a chair

Camp: of good government in the name of Nixon.

Nothing has come out of that yet. It's strictly under study now. There've been some bills introduced, but they are not ones we have worked on. I've done considerable work on it, with the Chamber, but it's nothing to publicize yet.

Committee on Conservation

Baum: The U.S. Department of Agriculture Committee on Conservation and Development of Soil and Water Resources.

Camp: That was a committee that was set up by Benson, and they asked me to serve on it from an irrigation standpoint, because, I presume, I'd done more work and made more speeches and written more documents about irrigation in the East than anybody else. I'm working on that same thing now under a different name--the National Rivers and Harbors Congress, in addition to the desalinization committee.

American Cancer Society

Baum: You've also been in various director positions; I have the California director of the American Cancer Society written down. I'm not sure of the year.

Camp: I'm not either. I didn't serve statewide; I served the Kern County unit for a few years. I served on the board.

Baum: What kind of a job was involved?

Camp: Well, raising money, meetings, we had to hire some people. They had some statewide meetings, and they had a national meeting.

Baum: Did they allocate funds?

Camp: Yes. What you raised locally, some of it went to the state, some of it went on to Washington.

Baum: Are any decisions involved as to what the money will be used for?

Camp: Locally, yes.

Baum: Would the allocation of local money come through the directors or from the national association?

Camp: Through the directors. Well, they may listen to the national or state organizations, but it is completely under the local people.

Baum: I suppose most of the funds locally would go to individuals or hospital facilities.

Camp: Yes; individual cases--similar to the Crippled Children's Society. I would say that while it involved different diseases, in operation it was quite similar. In the case of Crippled Children in Kern County, we saw to it that there wasn't a crippled child left at all, anywhere, without attention. That kind of work people donate their time and money to without any argument at all. We had one doctor who came down from San Francisco.

Kern County Museum Association

Baum: And you're on the Kern County Museum Association. Is this the one that Mr. Bailey is head of?

Camp: That's right.

Baum: Is it a local historical society or a museum?

Camp: Both, both. It's combined--natural history, any happenings in Kern County.

Baum: Are there any other civic bodies--?

Camp: Well, there are the Campfire Girls; the Farm Bureau, of course. I've served on most of the civic organizations down there.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Task Force on Economic Growth
and Opportunity

Baum: Your secretary sent me a copy of this telegram to you from Walter Carey, president-elect of the Chamber of Commerce: "Cordially and urgently invite you to serve as member of national task force on economic growth and opportunity, to be made up of country's outstanding business leaders under the chairmanship of Erwin Canham." He's the editor of the Christian Science Monitor.

Camp: That's right.

Baum: "This national group will develop proposals for long-range economic growth and opportunity and provide realistic answers to current problems of unemployment and poverty." This is dated April 14, 1964.

Camp: Well, that has been implemented and I am a member of a large national committee. I guess two of them are from the U.S. Chamber; the others are from the industries. It is I guess you would say--well, Johnson's anti-poverty program, anybody that gets less than three thousand dollars a year is poverty-stricken, he says. Well, this committee's study, which is going on now, we'll have a meeting shortly and go over it and then have some more studies--.

Baum: You're trying to draw up anti-poverty measures that you think would be useful?

Camp: We're surveying the whole field, to come up with facts as they are on unemployment, poverty, and what-have-you--not to counter the President's proposals at all, but to come up with facts. If he has facts that he based his political

Camp: pronouncement on we will give him all the information we've got to support it and try to do something about it.

On the other hand, if the facts as gathered come up with something else, show that another approach would be more effective in the eyes of this group, non-political as it is, because I'm sure no one knows who's a Republican and who's a Democrat on that committee--. The basis of it is the anti-poverty program, which made a big splash. Now, no one has come up with concrete facts proving the need of spending these hundreds of millions, and you and I paying taxes for it.

Baum: So your first purpose is to check on the facts, get the facts.

Camp: First, last, and all the time.

Baum: And the second purpose is, depending on what the facts turn out to be, to see if you go along with the President's proposals or make other proposals.

Camp: Yes, I assume you've stated it correctly. But it's not an anti-measure at all.

Now, this is different from the National Industrial Conference Board. This is a special task force committee which was set up.

Baum: This is under the Chamber of Commerce?

Camp: Well, it is and it isn't. These people are not all connected with the Chamber, just a few of them. The others are selected by the president of the Chamber, to get the best men they could get in the United States.

Baum: There are a lot of professors listed; there's Dr. C. Lowell Harris, professor of economics, Columbia University; Paul McCracken, professor of business conditions, School of Business Administration, University of Michigan.

Camp: You'll find all of those, excepting the farmer--I'm the only farmer so far as I know--.

Baum: Here's the director of economic research for Chase-Manhattan Bank; Consolidated Coal Company...

Camp: As you can see by the companies represented there, they are undoubtedly men of ability. They're not there for window-

Camp: dressing at all.

When you work with committees like this all I can say is, thank you.

Mrs.

Camp: These men all have too much business to attend to to spend a lot of time foolishly.

Camp: They're dedicated to doing a job, and some of us--everyone on there would have preferred to get somebody else, but you can't say no when you're asked to do a certain job.

Baum: Do all these men meet together?

Camp: Yes. We're going to meet in New York in late September or early October. And they won't be sending substitutes; they'll be there. When they accept they say they will attend the meetings; in other words, they don't accept unless they intend to work on it.

Baum: It's an impressive roster.

Camp: Oh yes.

There are two committees--one is the task force committee, and then we've got a group that we hired. This is the group, all the professors, which was hired.

Baum: They're the research advisory people?

Camp: Yes. I know of no economist in America better than this one--Martin R. Gainsbrugh, and he's vice-president and head economist of the National Industrial Conference Board. He just happens to be here because we called him in. He's a staff man on the National Industrial Conference Board.

National Industrial Conference Board

Baum: Now tell me what the National Industrial Conference Board is?

Camp: Well, it's a unique organization. A few years ago I hadn't

Camp: known much about it; I'd read some of their reports and so on. They put out the best economic research reports, on many subjects, of any group in America, including the Chamber. They specialize in that kind of thing. The present president was president of one of the biggest insurance companies--some years ago he was president of the U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce. Two years ago the president of the NICB had to retire because of his health, and they persuaded Bruce Palmer to come on as president of the National Industrial Conference Board. They have quite a sizeable staff, top economists who specialize, and they carry on research work all the time, giving seminars different places all over America from month to month.

Baum: Is this the kind of group that goes around to an industry and will give a course for the top management?

Camp: That's right.

I was invited a year ago to sit with it, and I didn't know--all these people, no one below a president or chairman of the board of a company, and you couldn't send a substitute. They'd been going on for some thirty years, and it got bigger and bigger, but they had no publicized meetings and no agenda. They meet regularly, and the chairman of that particular meeting will put all the names in a hat and when your name is drawn you start talking about anything you want to. I've never sat with a group that was more interested in things going on, and also interesting to me to listen to them. They speak their minds. They're not speaking as a vice-president or a president.

Baum: There are no special subjects discussed.

Camp: None.

Baum: Each man gets up and puts out the idea that's on his mind.

Camp: And then the crowd will take him to pieces. Take your clothes off you if they don't agree with you; there's no mercy at all. [Laughing] They jump right on you. Everybody's happy when it's over--at least I hope--but that's the way it is.

My first meeting with them, the third day I followed David Lawrence, the publisher of U.S. News and World Report. That was quite a spot they put me in, as a new man and a

Camp: farmer, because he's a brain, but it was most interesting. And you leave there pretty well-informed--a smattering, I'd better say--of what's going on in different businesses, and what's going to go on. The Bendix president, for instance, was talking about the billions of dollars his company's spending for putting platforms up in the air in space, for ships to land on. They're doing that project in co-operation with the space office of the government. You're listening to the horse's mouth. It was those people who were interested when I put out my idea of using the salt-neutralized ocean water as fertilizer and irrigation at the same time.

We went down to Pebble Beach this year, a similar group of people, most of them from the West. There were a few western people in that meeting; there were a few eastern people in this one. But the activity is the same, just work. The staff attends the meetings also, and they get ideas for their own research work. If any one of these organizations has a problem they'd like research on this group can jump on it and do it, and the company that wants it will pay for it.

Baum: So this board is a private group that will do economic research at the request of a company.

Camp: At times they do that, yes. They're not for political meetings, not for that purpose. The most politics that got into this was my own statement. I told them if the Republicans would nominate Goldwater we farmers and Democrats would elect him. I hope.

Baum: But they don't usually talk politics.

Camp: Oh no.

Baum: They talk about developments in the industrial field.

Camp: Yes. In the business world, and the whole world. Many of those people are there because they've had great ideas.

Baum: How did you become aware of them?

Camp: They wrote and asked me to be their guest, just right out of the blue. I didn't know them. When I got in there I found out that I knew some people. But it's a rich experience, I'll say that.

Baum: Do you get to go on these affairs, Mrs. Camp?

Mrs.

Camp: They don't let women into the meetings, but here and there

Mrs.

Camp: they get off in groups.

Camp: She was listening at Pebble Beach, and it was there that she and I got acquainted with Bill Bailey of the Corn Products Company. He was there. He's not only the chairman of the board of Corn Products, but is chairman of the board of the National Association of Manufacturers. They (N.A.M.) have a paid president; Bill doesn't get paid. We pay our own expenses; none of these jobs ever pays anything.

Baum: Do these men bring their wives with them?

Camp: Only once a year, and this year at Monterey most of them had their wives.

The new president of this organization is a long-time friend of ours, Bruce Palmer. I told him that I believe he has the most challenging job I know of. He and Arch Booth. Arch Booth is the executive vice-president of the U.S. Chamber. They're similar and yet they aren't. Both of them come in contact with the best brains in America, but Booth works with that type all the time.

Baum: How did this board get established, do you know?

Camp: They told me that it started some thirty-odd years ago, around the fireplace--.

Mrs.

Camp: Around a round table.

Camp: --two or three or four people, just like Louise and I have had many meetings and dinners and discussions in our home on Saturday nights. You sit and talk and talk and talk and many things are started from these discussions. And they still use the old high hat that was used to draw names out of at the first meeting years ago.

Baum: So it started informally.

Camp: Yes, and they'd invite others in, just like they invited me in last year. So far as I know, it is now confined to about fifty people, at present, at each of the meetings. Anything bigger they feel they can't handle. Not all of them talk, and some of them talk about things which are not of general interest yet and which doesn't provoke any argument, so they sit down and there's no discussion. But I would say that there's a discussion about over half of them, and 15 or 20 percent they really take the shirt off of.

Baum: Do you go prepared?

Camp: No. You go with what you have.

I've sat in on some others that are not the same, they have a program. There's a meeting once a year of the national organization, and that is more or less sponsored by the manufacturers' association. But there you have every organization in America invited, and they have an agenda, a subject they're going to talk about for two days, but no publicity. I sat in on one last December, and another one a year or two before that in Atlantic City where they talked about small farming. This one was interesting because all of the talk, all the program talkers and others, showed that they'd never been on a farm of any kind. Actually they had no conception of a small farm! And that is the basis why some of us help set up the agricultural journalism courses at Cal Poly. When you write or talk about something, you should know about it, its background.

W. B. CAMP--CITIZEN FARMER (CONTINUED)
(July 14, 1966 interview)

A Director of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States

Voluntary Unionism Committee

Baum: The last interview we had together was July, 1964, two years ago. At that time we discussed your educational philanthropy, the various loan funds you had made available for young people, especially country youngsters, but not exclusively country youngsters. And so I've been wondering what you've been doing up here? I know you're up here for a meeting.

Camp: Up here for a meeting of the Voluntary Unionism Committee, which is a committee of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, of which I am chairman, and we are meeting with our new members. We are getting ourselves oriented and prepared to do battle again next year in case President Johnson brings it up in Congress again, as he says he is going to.

We realize that is an issue that, in some people's minds--lots of people's minds--is controversial (in our mind it isn't controversial at all, just a matter of individual freedom) and as long as some of us agree, we are going to be battling to preserve that individual freedom. To join or not to join a church, for instance, and, it being our belief and determination, we are laying out our plans quietly, but definitely, to take Mr. Johnson to task if he wishes to do it again. We are convinced, without any misgivings at all, that we can win by a much bigger margin than we did the last time. President Johnson thinks maybe that's not true, but we told him so before the other one, we are telling him so again, openly, not secretly, because this isn't a matter of secrecy at all. It's a matter of educating publicly on what the issues are.

Baum: I know you were working on voluntary unionism the last time I talked to you, and you gave me some of the material you had printed up. What has the progress been in your work in that field in the last two years?

Camp: As you know, probably, it was last August that we met head on with the President and then Congress, and it was not until September that they had a vote, and the President found out that he had lost, but he didn't take that for final, and he brought it up again next spring. On two different votes this year we won again.

Our committee has been doing what we will be doing here tonight and tomorrow, quietly, with a lot of people who know the subject, lawyers of note and labor leaders and citizens of all walks of life--we are putting our ideas together, as we did before, and we are leaving no stones unturned.

And what did we do? I might say this: Senator Dirksen is given credit nationally, and he deserves it, and we give it to him, for leading the fight that won the battle. Senator Dirksen, however, was not going to enter the battle at all, saying that he knew we couldn't win. With the help of several senators, and two in particular, Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina and Senator Paul J. Fannin of Arizona who devoted their entire time to it, night and day, they created sufficient interest in enough other senators of like mind that they would stand pat and vote for the retention of section 14B of the Taft-Hartley Act, which is the measure that permits the states to legislate the right-to-work laws.

During that time we had on our staff a brilliant young lawyer named Bill Fannin, who just accidentally happened to be the son of the senator from Arizona. He's a brilliant young lawyer, who did a lot of footwork with these other two senators, and they rounded up enough names of good senators with the same ideas, who said, "We will stand pat forever." In the meantime, young Bill Fannin, secretary of our committee, coined a statement one day. He said, "Instead of filibustering, why don't we just call it 'an extended discussion'?" So he handed that to his father and Senator Strom Thurmond.

They thought so well of it that they went to Senator Dirksen with the names of the senators who were going to stand, and with this newly coined statement, asked him what he thought of it. He was so impressed that he said, "Are you sure these people will stand?" and they said yes. He stuck his hand out and said, "O.K., I'll go."

Camp: So, when Johnson called him over to his office and said, "Senator Dirksen, I'm committed, we are committed to repeal this," Senator Dirksen said, "Mr. President, I'm committed too."

Following this statement, the President said, "Ev, you're not going to filibuster in there, are you?"

He said, "Oh no, Mr. President. No filibuster. We wouldn't think of that. We'll just have a little 'extended discussion'." ("Debate" is better).

That went over in a very wonderful way and that was the basis of the battle that was fought from then on, which took several weeks.

Baum: Did most of the work in getting the senators committed go on in Washington, or did you have to do a lot of work before they would commit themselves by getting their constituents to put pressure on them?

Camp: I might just report one thing. In the Committee one day, in deciding whether to report the bill out to the floor of the Senate for vote, or whether to refuse to vote it out--many of the senators said that it didn't have to be reported out at all, we should just keep it, because we don't believe in it. The margin of vote was cast by one individual senator, whose name was Senator George Murphy of California, a member of the Committee, and he voted to put it out on the floor, the only one of the group to do so.

Immediately after the Committee adjourned, I received a telephone call from another senator. I've got no secrets--Senator Fannin. And he asked, "We're terribly shocked here, surprised, provoked. Murphy has gone back on his promise. He said he was going to be with us, and yet he voted to put it out on the floor. What can you do?"

I don't know that I can detail just all of the people that we talked to, but it was lots of them. And Senator Murphy heard it all, in very, very emphatic terms. One of the men closest to him, and who meant most to him, said, "That can't be true. He just can't do that."

But I said, "He did."

So when it came to defending it on the floor, Murphy thereafter did stand with the group.

Camp: A side comment would be that this means that Senator Murphy is on record for the good of the labor unions. He voted both ways.

Baum: Maybe he's a good politician.

Camp: Maybe that's good politics. I couldn't be elected because I wouldn't vote to put it out on the floor. If I didn't believe in it I'd vote to kill it to start with. But that's the difference, and that's what makes horse races.

We do know that lots of committees, lots of people, and most of the newspapers all over America were working on our side. They were strongly in favor of retaining 14B of the Taft-Hartley Act. I think all of your San Francisco papers were.

We took a vote of the members of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce by written ballot, by mail. It's hard for us to believe the results, but as the results came back, more than 90 percent turned out in favor of retaining it.

And we know that even though all those other committees did the fine work they did, it was this particular strategy that got Senator Dirksen to participate, that caused us to save 14B. Nobody denies that. Yet we don't give publicity to that at all, because all we wanted was victory, and these other organizations that exist by a lot more ballyhoo and raising money, we want them to continue doing that, because it educates the public. But we'll just continue our quiet behind-the-scene strategy.

Baum: I suppose you made available to the senators the results of that ballot.

Camp: That's right. But there were lots of ballots taken by lots of people, polls, I mean, and all were overwhelmingly in favor of retaining 14B of the Taft-Hartley Act, even among the labor union members themselves. So it wasn't anti-union at all. It was pro-union, in a big way.

Standing up to the President on the Taft-Hartley Act

Baum: Before we started recording, you mentioned a disagreement

Baum: between your committee and the president of the Chamber on whether to battle President Johnson on this issue or not. By the way, who is the president of the Chamber now?

Camp: The president now is Mr. Mike Wright, one of the finest men in America. But he was not president then.

We had another president in between, who was president of the Chamber for only one year--Mr. Walter Carey of Michigan. He was president of an automobile carrier association, and after he was elected president of the Chamber, sorry to say, and so was the Chamber as a whole sorry to say, they discovered that he had pretty close association with Hoffa. He had borrowed considerable money from Hoffa, since he was in the automobile transportation business, you see. Because of that, he probably had certain ties which he never admitted, or what-have-you, but anyway, it proved to be (this is my judgment, I'm sorry) twelve months of pretty frustrating experience for the Chamber of Commerce.

Baum: Was the Chamber of Commerce really 90 percent committed to voluntary unionism?

Camp: More than 90 percent, according to our poll.

Baum: And so Mr. Carey was going to speak to President Johnson.

Camp: What I started to tell you was that, as chairman of the Voluntary Unionism Committee, I asked Mr. Carey to make an appointment with President Johnson for a few members of our committee and me. We wanted to go over as man to man and tell him of our position and ask him his position, so that he would know definitely what we were going to do and we might, hopefully, find out that he was not going to push it very hard.

Baum: This was after Johnson had committed himself to trying to repeal 14B?

Camp: Oh yes, he committed himself in his inauguration speech.

Baum: Despite what he publicly stated, you wanted to know privately how hard he was going to push it.

Camp: We did, and we wanted him to know how hard we were going to push it. So Mr. Carey did go over to the White House; he did make an appointment for us to see him. But I found out that in visiting Mr. Johnson, he stayed there an hour and a half that afternoon, which is a rather unusual happening, because the President is a busy man and seldom keeps visitors for more than a few minutes. But when we reflected back on it, we

Camp: realized that this was an issue that the President of the United States had committed himself on to the AFL-CIO to get it repealed.

So anyhow, Mr. Carey called me the next day to tell me that we had an appointment with the President on the following Wednesday at eleven o'clock. So on Tuesday next we went into Washington with certain members of our committee, and one came from Seattle, one from Texas, one from New York, one from Michigan, and one from California. When we got to Washington on Tuesday afternoon I called the president of the Chamber of Commerce's office and consulted with him, the executive vice-president and the legal counselor. I discovered that there was a bit of excitement going on.

Carey informed me that President Johnson had called him on the preceding Friday night at nine o'clock at Carey's home in Michigan and, in his first remarks, said, "You blankety-blankety-blank, you have double-crossed me." And Mr. Carey, who was taken by surprise, stumbled on the phone, he hardly knew what to say, but finally said, "Mr. President, I don't know what you're talking about."

And the President said, "Oh yes, you do. I'm talking about that article that appeared in the paper this afternoon all over the United States about 14B."

And Mr. Carey said, "Well, Mr. President, I really don't know anything about it."

Then the President said, "In our discussion last week I gained certain impressions, and so on, and now that this has happened, you are going to have to recall all of those articles. You're going to have to write me a letter of apology; also you're going to have to fire every member of the Chamber of Commerce staff who had anything to do with the preparation of this article, and before you fire them, you're going to have to take care of them exactly as we'd take care of them in Texas, exactly like little bulls, because this is a double-cross, and I'm not going to stand for it." This was what Mr. Carey said to me when I walked into the meeting with him on the Tuesday afternoon before our Wednesday appointment.

So I said to him, "What does this have to do with our meeting, Mr. Carey?"

And he said, "I guess it means it's called off or something."

Camp: I said, "We've come in here to go over there, and I see no reason to call it off, and we want you to go with us and act as spokesman, because you are president of the Chamber."

And he jumped up and down; he was scared to death, and he said, "No, I won't do it, I won't do it!"

And I said, "Why?"

And he said, "You don't know the President of the United States."

And I said, "Well, he's just a man with two legs, and puts on his trousers one leg at a time."

He said, "No."

And I said that I would go anyway. And that was the end of the discussion that day.

Early next morning we met back in Carey's Chamber office, as we had previously agreed to do, for a little briefing among our committee men before we went over. And, while sitting in this meeting, Mr. Carey is called to the telephone, and comes back and says, "The meeting's off!"

And we asked, "Why?"

And he said, "Well, it's just off. There isn't going to be any. The President says he's not going to have a big crowd come in there," and so on.

We reminded Carey that the names of all the men who were going to go had been submitted by him to the White House, so there is something wrong somewhere in somebody's statement, and that we still intended to go. He sat there a little while and again he went to the telephone. Whether he was called, I don't know.

But when he came back, he said, "The President's office says three can come. I can come and bring two others. But we've got to come in the back door."

"But I won't go in the back door," I said. "I want you to know that. Meany and Walter Reuther went in the front door last week and came out of the White House President's office, stood on the top of the front steps, and spoke to the world,

Camp: at a news conference. For us to have to go in the back door is absolutely absurd and some of us aren't going."

Carey goes to the phone again. He comes back and says, "Well, the President says 'That's it'." Actually I think he was talking to the President's aides and not to the President at all.

But among us we agreed that he and a lawyer from Texas and a fellow from New York, Macy's, I believe, not on our committee at all, would go over, and we left sitting, not going, Mike Wright, who today is president of the Chamber, a wonderful man, but at the time he was chairman of the labor committee, general labor committee of the Chamber.

But neither he nor I went.

These three men stayed half an hour at the President's office. We agreed to have lunch together afterwards at a certain hotel. Mr. Carey again says to us, when they returned, "I think we oughtn't to do anything at all. I get the impression that the President is not going to push it. If we just behave and be quiet, the thing will just take care of itself."

We let him talk a little more. Then some of the others said something. But we informed Carey right quick that we were not going to remain silent, that we were going to vigorously push this matter in our own way, because we felt certain that the President was trying to get us to lay off so that he could slip it in without any difficulties.

Baum: What was this article that appeared the Friday previously?

Camp: It was a very fine and very well-written article about 14B, what it meant, what it is, and who was friendly to the cause when it passed Congress in the Taft-Hartley Act, and it told that President Johnson, who was at that time a senator, had fought very hard to get it passed and have it included in the bill. It quoted exactly his speeches at different times, and then went on to state the position of other people. The Governor of Texas, Governor Connally, a friend of the President, was very active to have it retained, and he and Johnson had their words about it, but Connally said they were going to stand pat on it forever.

And I presume that the President didn't like to see himself quoted back there and the public to know his previous stand, but most importantly, probably, was that he thought he

Camp: had seen to it that the president of the Chamber Committee would see that no activity went on in the Chamber to retain it.

Baum: He thought that the president of the Chamber had more power than he actually did.

Camp: That's undoubtedly what he thought, but the president of the Chamber has no power to shut up spokesmen for any committee of the Chamber, or to shut up any director of the Chamber, if he has personal views opposite to his own. It is very much a democratic institution.

Baum: You say Bill Fannin is the one who has done the research and put together this information?

Camp: Yes, decidedly. It was a very fine article, and after it was written we sent it out to every member of the Chamber, and every organization we could think of.

Baum: Could I get a copy of this article?

Camp: Yes, but I don't have it with me.

Baum: And so after that your committee on Voluntary Unionism talked to senators?

Camp: And we kept talking to them every day.

Baum: I suppose you continued with the publications in the newspapers?

Camp: Yes, but our committee did more work from then on talking to people personally, over telephones, talking to their friends back home, and then we put on a 14B Day, which, I believe, was in the first week of May, and we had people from every state, from every town in America telephone to tell their senators their own views (we never told them what to tell them, never!). We merely said "Give them your views", because it is a democratic organization.

Baum: You won that round and you are anticipating another fight again?

Camp: Yes, we are fearful that the President is going to try another fight. He has said so. We're hopeful, however, that he will recognize now that he has greater opposition than he had before. On the other hand, we're going to be prepared.

Baum: Well, it sounds like personal contact is the biggest factor.

Camp: That is right. Personal contact and telling the facts, with no propaganda of any kind, because we have never issued anything that we had to take back. We've researched everything.

Chamber of Commerce Reversal on the Connally Amendment

Baum: Are there any other developments in the Chamber of Commerce, before I get on to the rest?

Camp: Well, I don't know whether this is worthy of notation, but about a year ago I discovered that through some devious literature (there were some in the Chamber who wished to do away with the Connally amendment, which has to do with the World Court, over in Holland--I'm not a lawyer, but anyway, there's a clause in there that Connally of Texas--Tom Connally, not the governor--had inserted in the document when it became law that the United States reserved unto itself the right to decide which cases it would permit the World Court to handle, or something along that line.

But there was a controversy, and there still is today, that all the "one-worlders," many of whom were in the United Nations, wanted the Connally amendment to be knocked out. (There are a lot of people in America who don't want it to be knocked out, and I happen to be one of them.) And the people on the board who were of that mind schemed up a method of getting that voted out, and just by accident, it came up in the last five minutes before closing (I hadn't been there for half an hour, but I happened to return in time to hear it) and we did battle, considerable, and they had their votes there--most people had left--they retained their numbers to make sure they had enough to win, and they did win, just by a small margin.

But a few weeks later, in an executive session, it was reversed, because the board as a whole, and the officials of the Chamber, found so much criticism, bitter criticism, and resignation from the Chamber, that they had to take action, and some of us had something to do with that.

Baum: It slipped by, but somebody alerted them and the members who had been absent at that particular voting heard about it.

Mrs.

Camp: Bill was the only one of them on the floor when it was being discussed, and he grabbed the microphone and said that he wanted to go on record immediately as saying that this had not come up before the board. And the person who had presented it said that it had, and also the president of the Chamber who was presiding...

Camp: That was Carey again.

Mrs.

Camp: Oh yes. He said, "Well, it has come up."

And Bill said, "I am a member of the board; I've been to all of the meetings. It has not come up before the board; it has not been discussed; and I want to go on record as not approving of this, and demanding that it go back to the board."

However, nothing happened then, but further developments did ensue.

Camp: I don't know that all this should be said, because there are a lot of people in America who agree with that other philosophy.

Baum: Yes, Chamber of Commerce rules do require that issues that come up on the floor have to have been discussed by the board and then presented to the voting members a certain amount of time ahead of the voting, isn't that right?

Camp: That's right.

Mrs.

Camp: Following the meeting, the complete adjournment, the person who had brought it up and presented it on the floor, he and his wife were looking frantically for Bill before we all parted on our different ways for home, and he said, "I guess, Bill, I owe you an apology. It didn't come up before the board, and I'm sorry."

Bill says, "You owe the apology to the whole board."

Camp: The public, not the board. The public.

Baum: Well, I think you had something you wanted to discuss, Mr. Camp?

Camp: I have been on the board now already for fourteen years, much longer than I had hoped.

Baum: You are normally the agricultural representative on there, aren't you?

Camp: Yes, I'm the only farmer that has been on there for quite a long time. As you know, there are two representing agriculture, but I'm the only farmer. But I have felt that I have been there long enough and want to get off, let somebody new come in. But, over the years, there have been just a few of us willing to tackle these tough problems. When I got home I found out that I had been elected for another two years, which makes me the longest service on the board of any of them.

I had another experience recently, maybe it's not of significance, because as of this week the President of the United States is saying we ought to get closer to all of the Communist countries; we maybe ought to invite China into the United Nations, and what-have-you, and trade with all of them. Well, I still happen to be one who thinks as long as we are at war with the Communists, we shouldn't be supplying them anything that will help them to kill our boys, and all of the wheat and food and things that are going to Russia and her satellite countries definitely strengthens their bellies, if not their arms.

The board voted recently to recommend to Congress that we liberalize our means of trade, and of the sixty board members of the Chamber of Commerce, I was the only one willing to stand up and vote against trading with Russia as long as they are killing our boys. I hesitate to say these things but it is recorded history. But that too became such a hot issue after the board meeting in which they had voted to do this, so many threatened resignations took place so quickly that within two weeks or three weeks it also was reversed, so the Chamber did not make that recommendation to President Johnson.

Baum: When you want to be an effective member of the Chamber, is the best way to make personal visits to Congressional leaders just before a vote? You can't talk to them because they are all over the country.

Camp: You can talk to a lot of key leaders on the phone, and some of us have been there long enough to know who will and who won't get busy in a hurry. And it doesn't take too many telephone calls to alert an awful lot of people.

Baum: Oh, I guess you just know who to call. It's the telephone, then, that convinces?

Camp: The telephone makes things more personal, like personal visits. And you can't get out and see everyone. But in the battle that

Camp: we had on 14B Day thousands and thousands of persons got telephone calls, and telegrams went in. That was an alert sounded and prepared a couple of weeks ahead of time, saying that on this day, this is what we must do. And it was very effective.

That's the nearest we come to what some people call "ballyhoo," but it was not "ballyhoo," it was specific suggestions for a definite cause that the whole public knew about. We completely stay away from anything like the so-called "ballyhoo" tone, or activities. We leave that to others.

Efforts to Get Government Out of Cotton

Camp: Last year I had to testify quite a bit before Congress, the Agricultural Committee of the Senate, and the Agricultural Committee of the House. On the International Cotton Program, I have a copy of a recommendation that the Agricultural Committee of the Chamber made to the Chamber Board (and the Chamber Board O.K.'d it) and I presented it to Congress. It's got two names here: Walter Garver, manager of our agricultural committee, and I made the presentation.

We're pretty proud of the recommendation that we made. They didn't accept it, because it was too simple, so far. Those people wished to continue forever, if they can, their Farm Program. This one would mean that they would have to turn loose completely. It's a bold approach, but actually the Farm Bureau came to us and said they had just testified when they heard my testimony, and that, "Well, we can accept that, but Congress won't!"

And we said, "I'm afraid they won't, but if they did, we could get them out of our hair and go on about our business." It would cost us less money in the end.

We had been telling the government, "We can't let the farmers down by just saying, "We're through." This proposal would pay all the cotton growers for their allotment. And then say, "We're through." And the cotton grower would say, "Then I'm through too!" and just quit.

Baum: So this is a program to get the government out of the cotton program completely?

Camp: Out of the cotton completely. And we were proud of it then. We stand by it now.

Baum: Sounds pretty revolutionary.

Camp: It is revolutionary, but it's too simple. They don't want it yet.

Freedom Foundation

Baum: I saw something on television just the other day about the Freedom Foundation at Valley Forge, the one from which I think you got a medal or some kind of honorary recognition?*

Camp: Yes. I'm not active in it. Herbert Hoover was honorary president of it until he died and now Eisenhower is, and it is very active and growing, and they are awarding and recognizing certain institutions, organizations and individuals who are out working actively by group or individual actions, speeches or programs, for America and free enterprise. It will probably continue indefinitely and be one of the great institutions of America. (I am now a trustee of Freedom Foundation of Valley Forge. Note added September 1968 by W. B. Camp)

*In 1965 Mr. Camp was awarded the George Washington Honor Medal by the Freedom Foundation for a speech entitled "Barns and Skyscrapers--Inseparable." In 1968 he was elected a trustee of the Freedom Foundation.

International Committee in Geneva

Camp: Because of my associations with the Industrial Conference Board and the Chamber of Commerce of the U.S. I have been asked to accept membership to represent the United States on an international committee, and some members of it come from I.L.O. and different countries, and I'm the one from the United States. We're to meet in Geneva.

Baum: What did you say? I.L.O.?

Camp: International Labor Organization. I have accepted membership for the next five years. We're to meet over there as soon as we can arrive at a date. They've selected just a few out of an international group to come to the first meeting in Switzerland. They wanted to do a lot of it first by correspondence, and I, for one, said I won't start it that way if I'm to be a member. I will start no correspondence on this kind of a thing until I can sit down across a table, and see the whites of their eyes (of the people I'm dealing with) and know what they're thinking and then I decide whether I want to continue or not.

Presumably it has to do with agricultural problems, safety, pesticides, pollution, etc., etc.. The letters are too vague for me to form intelligent opinions.

National Rivers and Harbors Congress

Baum: I would like to ask you about the National Rivers and Harbors Conference.

Camp: I am a director of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress, and one of the three life trustees of the National Waters Resource Committee.

Baum: It's a private organization, is that right?

Camp: Yes, but it co-operates with all the federal, state, city and county organizations that have to do with water development for any purpose. When someone asks Congress to appropriate

Camp: money for a project somewhere, this group jumps onto it and studies it and comes up with a recommendation for or against it. It has great influence.

Baum: I should think it would be more interesting to people in the West than in the East.

Camp: Well, you'd be surprised. There are inland waterways and harbors and shipping all over America. It is one of the few national organizations that people from every state are vitally interested in.

Baum: Yes, I see it has a committee on industrial and municipal water use and pollution abatement. That would be of concern to everyone.

Camp: That's right. I am the representative from California and South Carolina, on irrigation and reclamation.

Baum: What are your duties as director?

Camp: To meet with them from time to time and appraise some of the recommendations being made concerning water development. Pollution is a part of it.

Baum: When were you appointed to this position?

Camp: During 1962. This was the first annual meeting I've attended. Since I was appointed to that, out of this grew a Bureau of Water Resources of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress, independent.

Baum: Another private organization?

Camp: Yes. It has three life member trustees, and they asked me to serve as one of the three. One fellow died shortly after they got me on the National Rivers and Harbors Congress, and they asked me if I would serve. That building in Washington, D.C., which I mentioned before, is the first project. There is a bill introduced in Congress to make it permissible to build the building inside the District of Columbia, and then we will donate it to the government ultimately. It will be an educational building; there will be room for every state to have offices, and there will be the biggest map that's ever been made, relief map, electrically operated, with telescopes and so on.

Baum: You were there in June, 1963?

Camp: Yes, for a whole week.

Baum: I know you are working on desalinization. How did that come about?

Camp: In 1964 they asked me to serve as the lay chairman, a congressman is official honorary chairman, and I'm actual chairman of the desalinization committee of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress Committee. There's never been a national committee at all until this one, and all of the work that's been done has been done by government agencies. Nothing happens, really, until the public gets behind it, and this is a committee that's set up to get behind it.

Senator John L. McClellan is the honorary chairman of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress, and I'm a director, and Henry H. Buckman is president, but on our desalinization committee we've got Congressman Aspinall as honorary chairman, and officially I'm co-chairman. In operation it means that I do the work.

The work of our committee is to push for research on desalting the oceans. We have to say that this is where the additional or new water is coming from. There is no other place. So we have got to get busy. We must get to all persons and organizations who have anything to do with it. So our secretary, who is there all the time, we work back and forth, and the thing is really mushrooming in a big way.

There's another phase that some of us are interested in too, and that is not just desalting ocean water. Since I saw you, I met with another group in New Jersey last November and at that meeting there were fifty presidents and chairmen of boards there--no one below a president. There was no schedule, but when a member's name was pulled out of the hat he started talking on anything he wanted to. When it got to mine--we didn't come on it till the beginning of the third day--I mentioned neutralizing the salt in sea water, pumping it out and irrigating with it, and using everything that's in the water for fertilizer. It can't be done today, and all chemists say it can't be done, but I say it will be done!

Baum: You say using it for fertilizer?

Camp: Everything that's in ocean water is good for fertilizer, or at least is not bad, excepting the salts. So if the salts can be neutralized...

Baum: So distillation won't be the answer.

Camp: Well, this is another thing. Distillation costs a lot of money. To have to take all the salt out is one thing, but I say someone will discover how to neutralize it. When I put out this idea, heads of three of the biggest corporations in America came to me afterwards and said, "This is the most potent idea we've heard in thirty years." But no one has ever spent a nickel on it, up till then. So that started some of our thinking, but not to neglect the other, not at all. They're two things which complement each other.

Baum: Distillation will make it drinkable. I guess that's what they're thinking about now. But this is something further.

Camp: Yes. I've planted the idea, tried to, two or three times before in the last ten years. I made my first statement on it in a speech in White Sulphur Springs in 1953, to the National Fertilizer Association. But afterwards I said to myself, "What a nut. These people are interested in selling fertilizer; this would be against them." [Laughing]

But this new committee will be, frankly, one of the most important committees in America.

Just recently, in connection with that, about two or three months ago, I went up the Colorado River for two days with the other directors of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress and the Commissioner of Reclamation of the Interior, inspecting the Powell Dam, which is the Glen Canyon project for water conservation, and also inspecting the sites of the two controversial dams that the Sierra Club is bitterly fighting. I might have been somewhat sympathetic to their idea until I saw it myself. I studied it in detail, and now I think they are just as cockeyed as anybody can be. I think they're nuts!

Baum: You mean you think the dams will be useful?

Camp: Absolutely. They didn't want the Powell Dam either. Only a handful of people had seen this area of the Colorado River in all the fifty years before, and the Sierra Club and some other folks who are just as foolish don't want any Indian track or anything messed up. They want it kept where somebody someday can see it. Only a few people ever would have.

Now, I got in a boat at Powell Dam and went for a hundred

Camp: some-odd miles that day, and back, on the prettiest water, among the most magnificent sights I've ever seen in my life, which I would never have seen except by water. Now, millions of people can and will see it, and they never would have. It's hot, barren, rough country, and a lot of people lost their lives trying to see it even by boat, but now it's smooth, clear water with a lot of fish to catch, and there are so many benefits.

I'm a water conservationist. I happen to be on a committee that's spent thousands of my own dollars in the East, as you know, trying to persuade people to develop water for irrigation. And they are now. So when I saw this, I merely said that this same thing, in smaller proportions, should be done in every stream and canyon all over America.

A few months ago, in December, I had to be on the panel of a water meeting in Washington, D.C., and there was a discussion of the same thing, and the one contribution I made there was that water for irrigation must be considered from a national standpoint and not just a western one.

Delano--Comments on Efforts to Unionize the Grape Workers

Baum: Well, I do want you to tell me just a little bit about what you think of the Delano grape strike.

Camp: Well, the Delano mess is not made or caused by people in Delano, either the town citizens or the farmers; it is completely caused by outside doings. It is completely picketed by outside folks brought in, and there is no strike in Delano; there has been no strike in Delano; there's going to be no strike in Delano.

The agitation in Delano is caused by hoodlums of many kinds, including hoodlums of the National Council of Churches (I'm a great church man myself). We go to church every Sunday, and we believe in Christian activities, but we do not believe in the type of agitation now carried on by people connected with the National Council of Churches.

Baum: Has your church and the one in Bakersfield dealt with the strike at all? In the pulpit or otherwise?

Camp: Yes. Even the ones in Delano proper. Articles written by the ministers in Delano, as fine as you could ever read, telling the facts, the truth, and nobody can dispute those facts. Saul Alinsky, in his book, has just about as much influence, though, as anybody else. Maybe more. Because Chavez was trained by Alinsky.

Mrs.

Camp: I'd like to stress that there's been the largest crop of grapes last year that's ever been harvested, and then all this mess.

Camp: Yes, they just marched up and down and around a day or so, but our labor paid no attention whatever to them, and in that area we have several Mexican foremen in charge of the ranches and the grapes. The man in charge of our grapes is a Mexican boy who was born and raised in the Delano area, and he and his whole family live in a lovely home and they're as happy as can be. Nobody's unhappy. Excepting the outside agitators who can't get what they came there to get, namely to organize and get money into the tills, so they can go out and preach their...

Baum: Well, just recently on DiGiorgio's ranch, they had an election, and they seem to favor the Teamsters there, if they're going to have to deal with a union.

Camp: First of all, let me go back a bit. The DiGiorgio Corporation was founded by Mr. Joseph DiGiorgio, Sr., quite some years ago. He died about twelve years ago, and he and I were partners at the time he died, and of a considerable operation, and during that time, well, in October of 1947, October 1, a picket line was formed around the ranch, and for two and a half years he and I had that picket line, and we fought it. We won. It killed him...I'm still going. But he had very definite ideas, and treated his people wonderfully well; he built nice homes for them, but he stood firm.

He had no children. The day he died, the management was taken over by five of his nephews, sons of his brothers. They don't have the same spirit of Americanism that the old man had. All Hell couldn't jar Mr. DiGiorgio, Sr. loose from principle. Had he been here, this thing would have been handled the same way he handled it then.

Camp: But these boys have some other operations, a winery and S&W foods and so on, in which they have some union contracts, and so I guess they decided that if they had a vote, their labor wouldn't vote for the union. In fact, I'm quite sure of that.

But somebody--Teamsters--got in there and did some work, and then the Catholic church says, "Teamsters, you come out!" I wonder if it was some kind of a deal. I have ideas.

Baum: I wonder why the Teamsters got in there? And why they would rather deal with the Teamsters than some more local union?

Camp: I have some ideas, but I don't have the facts, so I'd better not say.

Baum: Because I know what you think of Hoffa, and then to get messed up with the Teamsters--.

Camp: What I'm merely saying is that the nephews are not fathering the same principles that the old man did. They're not as experienced. And it's unfortunate. Of course, the Schenley winery (they only have a small ranch operation, and the labor there is a drop in the bucket compared to their total labor force) and all the rest of their labor force is unionized--liquor establishments, and whiskey making, and so on--and they don't care. As a matter of fact, they might be a party to some of this, I don't know.

And Christian Brothers, which is one branch of the Catholic group, those particular priests or monks or something had been party to the agitation all along. So they were anxious to sign, and make believe to the world that here are some farmers who have broken down and they are signing this thing. That's the situation there.

But these hundred Presbyterian ministers of the Bay Area who agreed to put up several thousand dollars to hire Saul Alinsky to educate them is the most asinine thing that any ministers ever did. And it means that they have been brain-washed.

And then the city of San Francisco last week went on record against Delano; the mayor of San Francisco has been the head of labor unions for many years, before he was a congressman, and so you can understand that. [Mayor John F. Shelley]

Camp: But Delano is one of the finest areas in California insofar as relations between races. There has been no trouble. None.

Baum: Is there any trouble with Mexicans and Filipinos working together?

Camp: None at all. Never. None.

Insofar as Delano being against blacks, and Mexicans and Filipinos, why, many of their top officials are non-Caucasian. I believe the chief of police is a Mexican; maybe it's not the chief. And there's a Negro minister in Delano, a very fine fellow, who says time after time that this thing "is causing us Negroes a lot of trouble." He says the Negro race has been in the limelight for several years now, and this is bad for them, because these people are all getting along well together.

Baum: You don't think the agitation will bother your operations at all?

Camp: Not a bit.

Mrs.

Camp: This is all propaganda put out by outside agitators with the hope that they can deter the country's thinking, and they are painting a black picture, but it is not true.

Baum: Do you anticipate that you'll have to go into union bargaining or something? If DiGiorgio signed up?

Camp: No. Let's get it straight. We, as farmers, don't care if our labor wish to go one way or the other, we're not going to block them. We're going to say, "God bless you."

The American public ought to give serious thought to the idea that if all this country's farmers were to be completely under the control of one man--the labor leaders--he could starve America to death. We ought to think of how we would handle such a situation, if it were to come about.

Baum: Have the growers in the Delano area gotten together the way they did back in the 30's and 40's when you were so active? The growers all worked together.

Camp: The only difference is, that this so-called Christian winery, made up of that group of monks or somebody (monkies, I would call them), wishes this thing to happen.

Baum: Are the growers sticking together though like they used to?

Camp: Oh yes, they are sticking. I have been away most of the time, and I have felt that this is an occasion for the younger ones.

I have been on the phone quite a bit. It's not like the 30's and 40's, but one man can only do so much.

The DiGiorgio boys did what they did, if you want to know, without consulting a single grower, and that the old man would not have done. We had everybody in the cause then.

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